



SIMON KENTON THE SCOUT

·J·I·CORBY·



0792

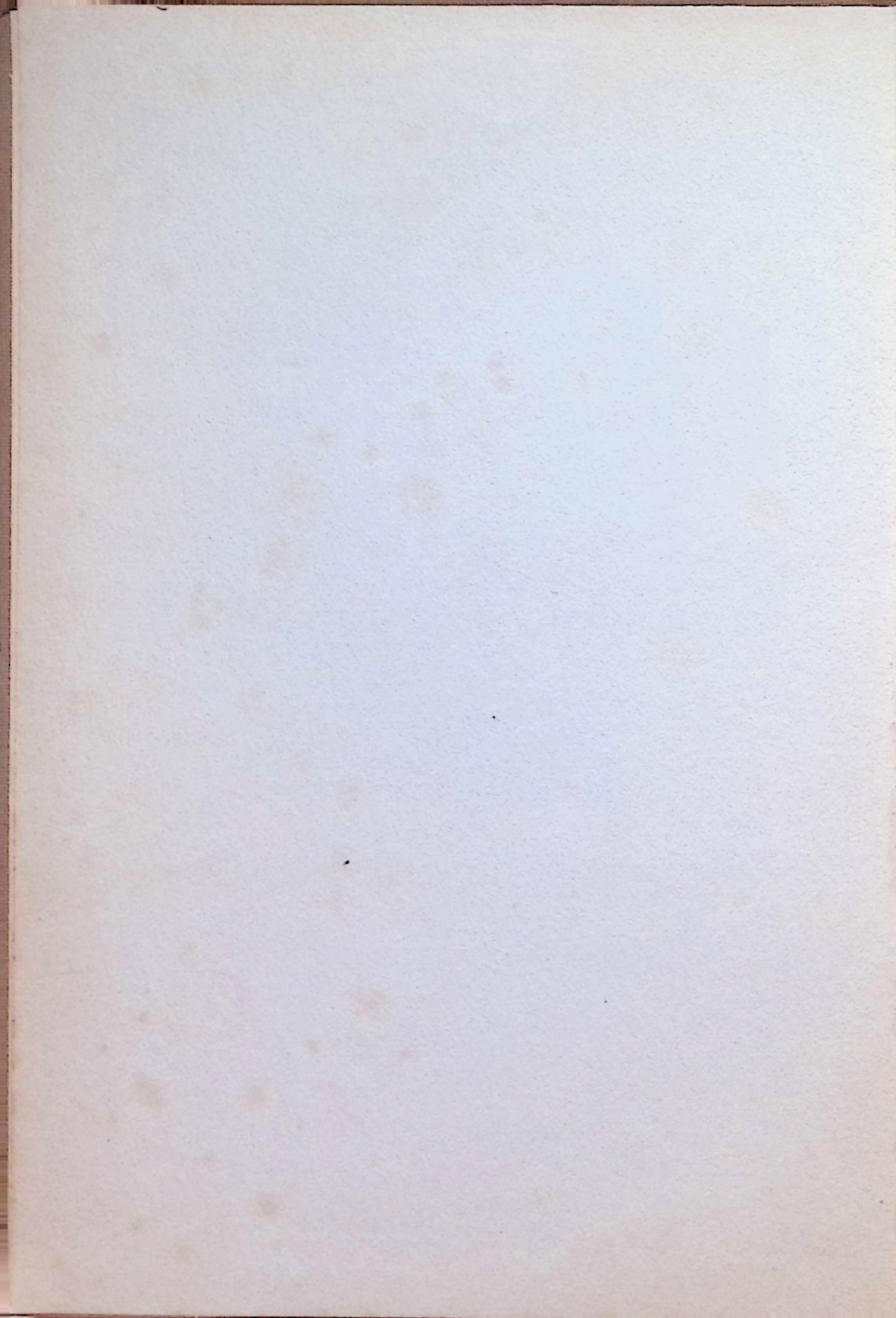
REMOVE FROM ENCL. LIBRARY
REFERENCE COLLECTION

Not to be Taken from the Building

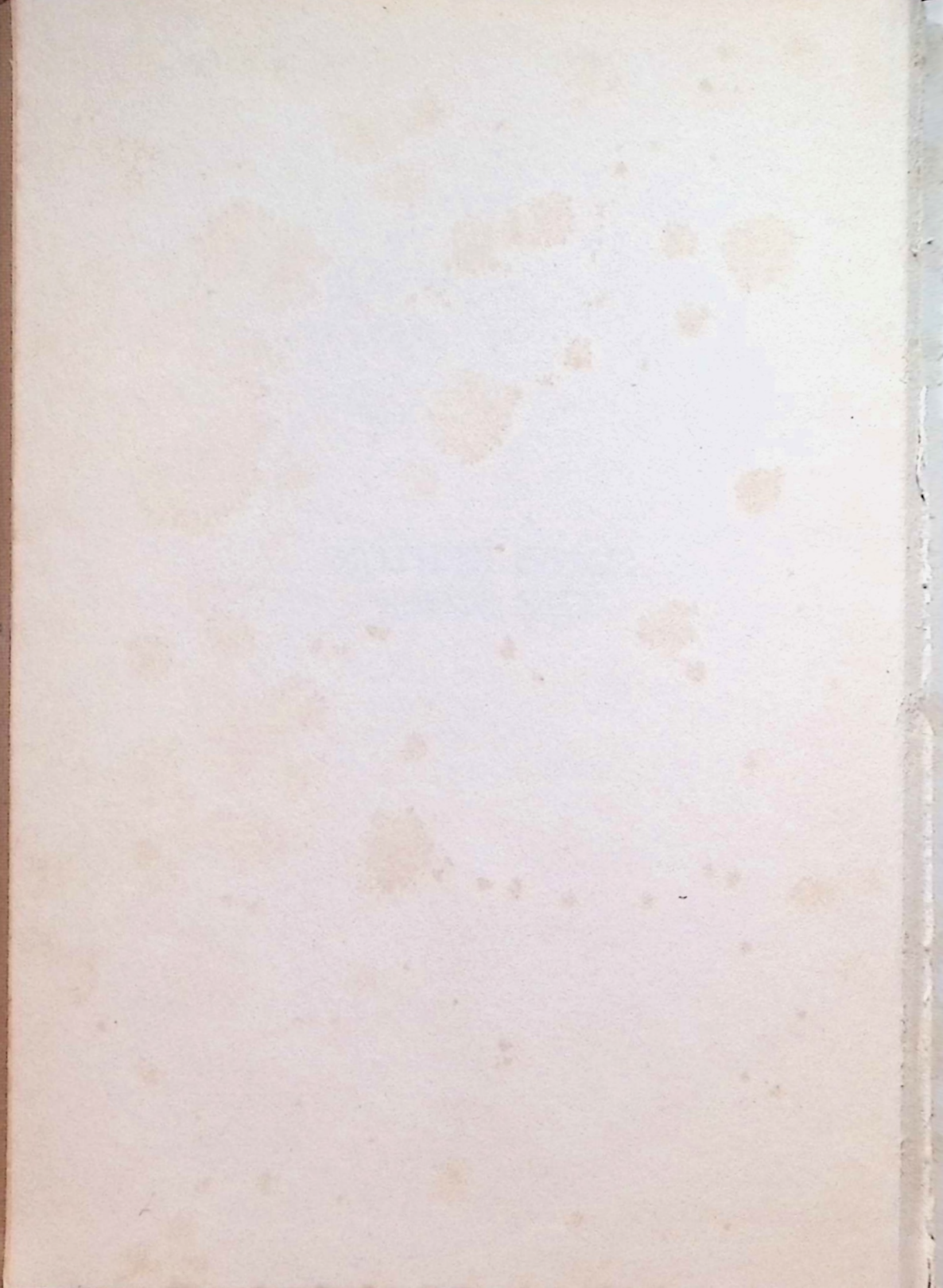
Ask at the desk for other material on the
subject for home reading.

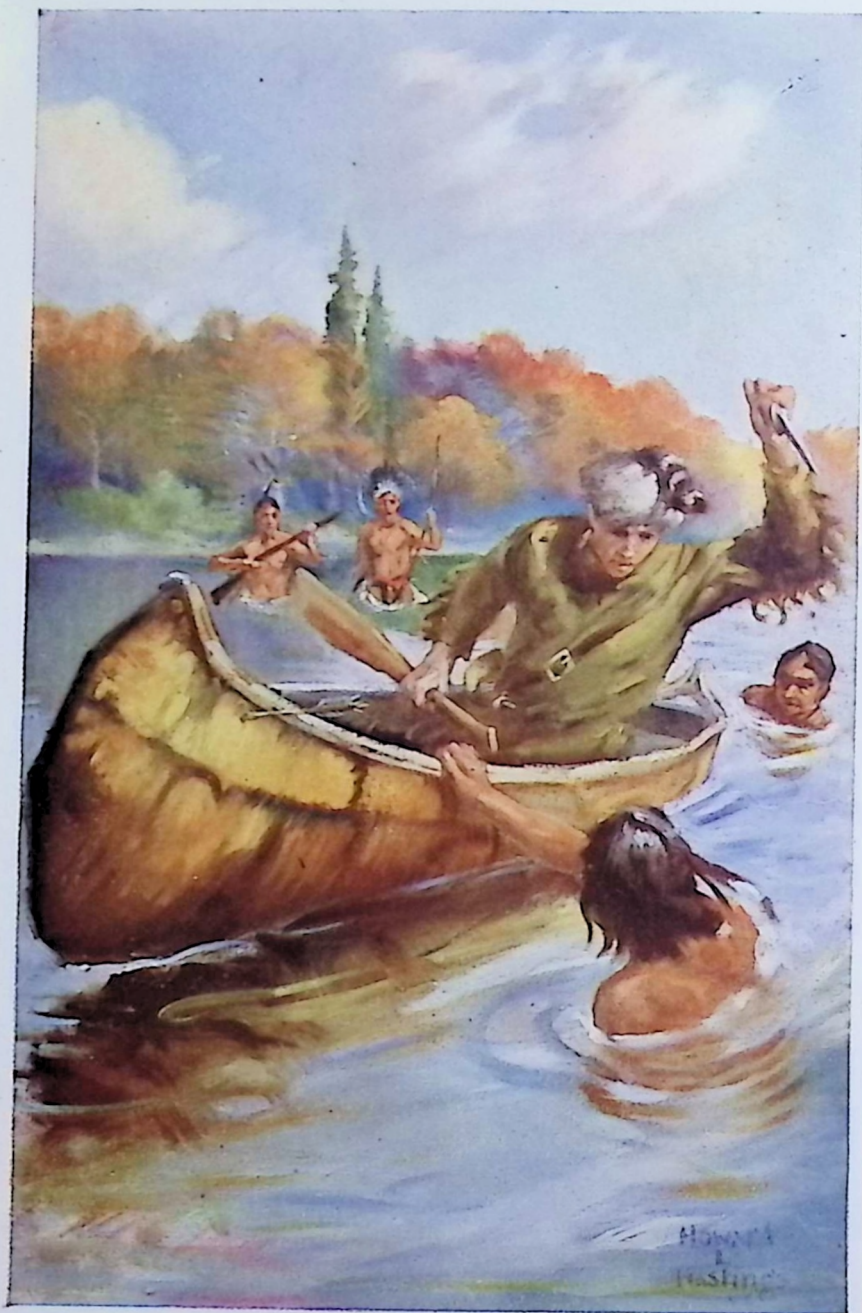
Assistants are pleased to help you.

Form 149 10M 1/65 PLC.



**SIMON KENTON
THE SCOUT**





SIMON WAS A MATCH FOR THE REDMAN

Frontis

SIMON KENTON THE SCOUT

A TALE OF FRONTIER LIFE
DURING THE REVOLUTION

BY

J. I. CORBY

AUTHOR OF "DAVID CROCKETT"

ILLUSTRATED IN COLOR BY

H. L. HASTINGS



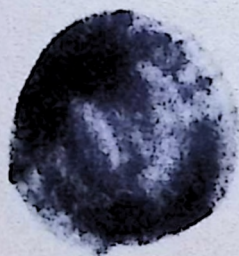
NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

P2
7
.C81
Si
1925



COPYRIGHT, 1925, BY
THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY

Fourth Printing



PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

OCT 21 1965

PREFACE

A story of adventure does not usually profit by a preface. With a redskin lurking just around the corner, the eager boy who is looking on is too impatient to see the result of the fight to waste much time over the preliminaries.

Yet, a word of introduction for Simon Kenton, far from being amiss, will aid the reader in his enjoyment of the colorful pages which follow. The author has chosen to cast in fiction form a group of picturesque characters to whom the sober pages of history cannot do justice. Such men as Simon Kenton, Simon Girty (in his better days), George Rogers Clark, Daniel Boone, General Lewis, and many another hardy soul made possible the extension of the original thirteen colonies lying along the Atlantic seaboard into the United States which stretched out toward the west as far as the Mississippi. They penetrated the wildernesses of Kentucky and Ohio, fighting the Indians step by step, and wresting the land in turn from them, the French, and the British. The single exploit of Major Clark in taking Fort Kaskaskia from the Brit-

ish during the Revolution enabled the United States to lay claim to the whole Mississippi Valley.

How closely the author has adhered to fact is shown by the following letter from her: "Simon Kenton was a historical character, a younger contemporary of Daniel Boone. My dates are correct according to the historical data I was able to obtain. I think all dates are substantially correct, because such events as Dunmore's War, the Revolution, and the Clark expedition against Kaskaskia are certain. All the larger events of Kenton's life which I have recorded are taken from historical records. The fight with which the story opens, the discovery of the Blue Lick (though I understand Kenton was not the first white man there), Simon's connection with Dunmore's War, his connection with Girty, his accompaniment of Clark against the upper Mississippi towns, and the closing chapters where he is captured by Indians, tied to a wild horse, and other episodes, are all taken from old books written by men who came directly after this period. Of course, the stories may have grown a bit before being recorded, but they are met with in various places, and it is more likely, I should think, that many of Kenton's real exploits have been forgotten than that these were wrongfully attributed to him. Simon Kenton

lived to be a very old man, eighty, I think, which brought him up rather close to our times. His later misfortunes are a matter of history; he was defrauded of his lands, the Government did not stand back of his claims, and his is an outstanding case of the ingratitude of a Government, for he died in poverty and want."

This story has woven the facts of his early life into as exciting a narrative as ever Cooper penned. It shows the redman at close range, as Simon Kenton himself knew him. It follows the daring and resourceful scout as he penetrates hundreds of miles of virgin forests, across the pathless prairies, and down uncharted streams. Unseen perils lurked in every thicket. It was indeed a time fraught with peril to every frontiersman. The Indians, fearful of being dislodged from their hunting grounds, fought the paleface relentlessly. The few scattered white settlements were in danger of fire and tomahawk. The redskins were encouraged and supplied with ammunition, first by the French then by the British; so the danger to the settlers was ever present.

Such is the background of this story which the author unfolds with rare skill. The incidents follow rapidly, almost breathlessly, but piece together into a rich tapestry, glowing with life and color, and revealing a section of our

history too little known and appreciated by historians and general readers alike.

"Simon Kenton" is at once a good story and a genuine contribution to history.

J. W. M.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE FIGHT	1
II. FLIGHT	7
III. OVER THE MOUNTAINS	20
IV. THE CANE-LAND BECKONS	34
V. LOST IN THE WOODS	46
VI. SIMON MAKES A FRIEND	57
VII. ATTACKED	65
VIII. WAR	80
IX. THE FOREST RUNNERS	89
X. THE BATTLE AT POINT PLEASANT	95
XI. SIMON MAKES A DISCOVERY	104
XII. FRIENDS—MADE AND LOST	114
XIII. NEWS OF THE REVOLUTION FILTERS BACK	127
XIV. A PERILOUS JOURNEY	140
XV. PURSUED	153
XVI. A MONSTER BEAR	162
XVII. THE INDIANS STRIKE	171
XVIII. FEAR STALKS THE BORDER	186

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIX. A DARING RESCUE	191
XX. AN ADVENTUROUS EXPEDITION	204
XXI. AN ENCOUNTER WITH A RED GIANT	214
XXII. CLARK'S TRIUMPH	222
XXIII. CAPTURED	236
XXIV. LASHED TO A WILD COLT	250
XXV. THE GAUNTLET	258
XXVI. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE	268
XXVII. "YOU MUST DIE!"	280
XXVIII. THE STAKE	292
XXIX. IN THE HANDS OF THE BRITISH	302
XXX. SIMON HEARS FROM HOME	314

ILLUSTRATIONS

Drawings in Color by H. L. Hastings

Simon was a Match for the Redman (158) <i>Frontispiece</i>	
There was a Sharp Report, and a Bullet Whistled over Simon's Head	PAGE 26
Onward Swept the Herd, with the Speed of the Rushing Wind	132
Instantly They Came to Death Grips	216

SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

CHAPTER I

THE FIGHT

“I ’low nothin’ but a coward calls his friends in to help him out in a fight!”

“Air you callin’ me a coward?”

“You are a coward, William Veach! You didn’t fight me fa’r and sq’ar—you hit me when I wasn’t lookin’! And yore friends held me back when I wanted to lay you out. Fight now, if you dare!”

Simon Kenton had just cause for considering himself wronged. He had quarreled with William Veach, the son of a neighbor, and a few nights before, while at one of the boisterous jollifications that attended frontier weddings, the quarrel had broken out into open hostility on William’s part. As Simon said, young Veach had taken an unfair advantage, and had been protected by his friends from the natural result of his daring. Simon’s wrath had been growing, during the intervening days, and this morning it

2 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

had flamed into open insult when he met his enemy. The quarrel between the two boys had resulted in no breach between the Kenton and Veach families; Simon's father had sent him to borrow a crosscut saw, that morning, from the elder Veach. Such implements, which were not required for constant use, were often bought and used as common property by the early settlers. Simon had obtained the saw, and was on his way home again, when he met William, who was engaged in carrying boards from the woods, where his father had rived the timber, to a small outhouse which they were constructing. William's conduct of the other night had been the result of a frolicsome spirit rather than a real wish to widen the breach between himself and Simon, but Simon's present black mood had its effect upon the other.

"I'll fight, don't you be afeared o' that," he retorted, flushing.

Simon dropped the saw where he stood.

"Come on, then," he commanded, and led the way into the woods. Here a solitary open space was quickly decided upon, and the two youths stripped to their trousers—or rather long buckskin leggings which took the place of that garment—and their moccasins. Veach had the better of it in weight; he was nearly two years older than Simon, who at sixteen had already

reached his full six feet two inches of height. Standing lithe and slim, his face paling with anger beneath its ruddy tan, the younger lad was no mean opponent for the heavier William. Both showed muscles pliable and elastic; both were hard and deep of chest, firm of limb. They faced each other for a second, then, eyes straight, they slowly started forward; met suddenly in a leap.

For rules the frontiersman had no use; he was guided solely by opportunity when he fought, and he fought to win, not to guard himself from injury. Simon and William were masters of the art of wrestling, as practiced in their primitive surroundings. They knew a few simple holds and twists which man has known from time immemorial; for the rest, they relied on the inspiration of the moment to serve their ends. Now they fought close, body to body, necks drawn down between the shoulders. William had a trick of his own; he used his weight from the outset, leaning upon his opponent, wearing out his strength as he planted skillful blows. There was the sound of sliding feet on damp earth; the dull thud of fists on firm flesh; then the breathing became heavier, grew audible. For sheer lack of breath they parted, gasped and hurled themselves upon each other again; they butted with their heads, plunged their elbows into each other's ribs.

4 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

William tried a forward jerk, foot ready to trip the younger lad; Simon, perpetually in motion, slid from a solid hold; his legs were wide; the foot shot forward, missed its mark. Neither combatant could see clearly by now for the blood from battered faces constantly obscured their sight; but they clung so close that every move was anticipated at the start. William, bent on throwing his adversary, dived for his legs. Simon was too quick; he seized him under the arms, his hands across the other's chin. With swiftly doubled fists he rubbed his knuckles across William's face. A gasp of agony escaped the heavier lad; the next instant his red fury taught him a new trick. He found himself with hands hooked over Simon's neck, conscious of his power to win. His legs were well set; elbows held close. With a sudden twist he hurled his opponent to the left, pushing his arm upward and ducking his own head beneath; his right arm slid from Simon's neck to his elbow; with a quick turn, William, holding his adversary's left arm tightly pinned, lifted him from his feet—lifted him high.

Simon fell upon his back, and before he could move William was upon him.

"I'm a coward, am I?" he gasped, sitting astride his enemy while he caught his breath.

"Who's the best fighter now?" he jeered. "Who got licked before an' came back for an-

other beatin'? Had 'nuff? Or want some more?"

Each question was accompanied by a punch, or a kick of the victor's feet. Helpless Simon lay inert, stubbornly refusing the cry of "'nuff" that would have brought cessation of his adversary's punishing blows. His eye, roving despairingly for a means of retaliation, focussed on a nearby sapling. Quick as lightning a way of escape flashed through his mind. William was on his knees now, preparing to damage his countenance further unless admission of defeat were forthcoming. Simon lifted his head suddenly, and sank his teeth into William's leg, just above the knee. He bit with all his strength, with the vigor of despair, and William half leaped, half fell forward. He was now within reach of the sapling. With a nimble turn Simon caught his enemy's long queue of hair and twisted it swiftly round the sapling. William was a captive! A yell of delight burst from Simon's throat as he leaped to his feet and proceeded to pay back with interest his adversary's beating. He pummeled and kicked the fallen lad in a wild rage until his own strength began to fail. William had now ceased to offer any resistance, and Simon, his blind fury subsiding, saw that he lay with closed eyes and fallen jaw. Vaguely frightened, he bent over the lad, and was horror-stricken when

6 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

he saw that he did not breathe. Unwinding the hair from the sapling, he raised the youth in his arms, and, his panic growing, shook him.

"William!" he cried. "William, William!"

William's head rolled loosely on his shoulders; his eyelids never quivered. Simon, letting him go at last, saw the apparently lifeless body sink to the ground.

"I never meant to kill him," he muttered, rising slowly, his eyes fixed upon the prone figure. "William!" he whispered again, hoarsely. A soft sigh in the pine boughs above answered him; a dry leaf rustled against his foot. He stood a moment irresolute, then backed slowly to the spot where a short time before they had cast aside their clothing in a rage to fight. Here he stooped swiftly, snatching up his own shirt, turned, and fled into the woods.

CHAPTER II

FLIGHT

IT was April, and the young green of the trees whispered beneath smiling skies as Simon ran, heedless alike of the beauties of the forest and the red peril which it masked. The caution of the woodsman was presently to get the upper hand of the boy's panic; just now his sole aim was to elude the hue and cry that imagination pictured in full pursuit behind him. "Have they missed him yet? When will they go to look for him?" The words ran through his mind, over and over, while the sickening conviction that he and young Veach had been seen together, walking toward the woods, cut deeper and deeper, until his numbed brain could no longer hold a thought. More by instinct than by conscious reasoning he had directed his flying steps westward, away from home and friends. Blindly he was running toward the Alleghanies—the almost unexplored barrier between the eastern settlements and the flimsy frontier line that was slowly encroaching upon the hunting-grounds of Shawnee, Delaware and Wyandot. His story might have had a swift, disastrous

8 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

ending, of the kind so common in the early history of the country that it would have gone unrecorded, if terror and haste had not combined to rob the youth of breath. His steps faltered, he lurched against a tree and paused to recover his strength. Then it was that the natural caution of the wilderness boy asserted itself, and raising heavy eyes, Simon stared about him, calculating carefully a place of refuge. Not far away he caught sight of a great tree, lying uprooted by some ancient storm. Briers and bushes grew thickly around the fallen giant of the forest; he crept slowly toward it, parting the bushes gently so as to leave no trail. As he had suspected, the old tree was hollow. In another moment he was inside, his head pillowed on crumbling wood, and exhausted nature was exacting toll for physical and mental strain.

The west was blazing with the sunset when he woke. Until darkness could throw its protection around him he dared not stir. Meanwhile he lay motionless, his mind in a ferment. He would never see his cabin home again, he thought. It wasn't that he had ever felt any real tenderness for the place he called home, but to leave it in such a manner—a fugitive, fleeing just punishment. He pictured the two square box-like rooms that made up his father's house, the open passageway between, covered with rough clapboards.

Fires would be roaring up the huge dirt chimneys at either end of the cabin by this time; supper would be sputtering above the leaping flames of one of them. Supper! The thought writhed its way through Simon's body, leaving fresh torture in its wake. He had eaten nothing since early morning. At that moment he could not think of anything more alluring than the kind of evening that had been regularly his for as long as he could remember—a hearty supper of bear-steaks and corn cakes, or some similar food, suited to ravenous woodland appetites, and, directly after, bed, a cozy matter of piled furry skins beside the fire.

Glad that at last night had fallen on the forest, Simon rose presently and hurried through the heavy gloom. But now he used caution as he sped—he must not fall into the hands of Indians. “But I’d rather they caught me than be brought home again,” he thought, and shivered, with a hand to his throat, as if the hangman’s rope were already there. All through the night he threaded his way in the dark, his feet occasionally stumbling on roots and tangled vines, but he scarcely noticed the obstructions. “They’ll never get me—I’ll starve to death in the woods first!” was the burden of his thoughts, as he bent every energy to outstrip a possible pursuer. Dawn put an end to his fearful effort. He sought shelter,

10 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

found it beneath an overhanging cliff, and slept the sunny hours away.

Another night, and Simon knew that he was, if not safe from pursuit, at least so far in the lead that it would be very hard for anyone to catch up with him, since he meant to keep on going. He had stumbled upon an Indian trace by this time, and now he followed it closely, well knowing that he could make better time and meet fewer obstacles by this method than by any other. The trail was only a foot wide, and worn nearly a foot deep by the thousands of moccasined feet that had filed through the shadowy forest, year after year. But if one danger had been lessened others loomed larger. He was in the backcountry now, where there were settlements, it is true, but small and scattered ones, and tales came back, every now and then, to the older communities, of a cabin-burning, of the scalping of a lonely wayfarer, showing plainly that the Indians, while not openly at war with the whites, still cared little for the treaty which they had made at the close of Pontiac's War. Matters had been growing worse for several years; Simon had heard the rumblings of war as the white men aimed to strike back for every blow received, and strike harder than the Indians. The young outlaw knew only too well that his scalp was in danger if he went forward

—but his neck was in danger if he went back! Moreover he was hungry—not hungry as he had been that first day, ravenous for food. Now he was sick-hungry, famished for food without longing for it. Roots torn from the earth with savage fingers, water swallowed hastily from brooks and springs he had found, had made up all the meals he had had, and apparently there would be nothing else until he reached a settlement.

Noon of the third day found a worn, weary lad, lying in a covert, wide awake. He had slept since dawn, but the gnawing hunger that gripped him had dragged him back from his blessed unconsciousness. He knew that he must find food, be the risk what it may. Cautiously he rose, peering out between the leaves of his thicket-retreat, and saw nothing to alarm him. A company of squirrels chattered over some of last year's nuts in a little beech-grove nearby, and Simon suddenly saw himself beside a glowing fire, roasting a fine fat fellow on the end of a stick. He forgot the Shawnees—not far away he could see a good-sized rock. He stepped out of the bushes, the twigs crackling behind him. Eyes on the rock, he felt rather than saw the shadowy figure that darted behind a tree, then dropped to a fallen log not twenty yards off. Simon leaped to cover—a log served him, too—and lay waiting for the Indian to make a move.

12 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

Bitterly he regretted that he had no gun, that only his bare hands and his swift feet stood between him and the savage lurking so close.

"Mighty good thing I saw him afore he could get in a shot," he chuckled to himself, as he lay flat on the ground, his ears strained to catch the sound of a stealthy footstep.

The minutes slid by, became hours. Simon was cramped. The sun had found him with its rays, and had beaten down upon him until black specters danced before his eyes if he kept them open, and red-and-gold ones if he kept them shut.

"I'm bakin' like a johnny-cake," he thought, and again the image of the fat roasting squirrel, that had been driven from his mind, came back with great force. Anger ran suddenly through his veins. Almost without knowing what he was about, he lifted his voice:

"Fire away—and I'll take the chance o' savin' my own bacon!" he shouted, and leaped to his feet. A low laugh answered him, a coonskin cap appeared above the log, then a thin brown face, then the whole lank figure of a white man.

"Howdy, stranger," he drawled; "I shorely thought you wuz one o' them sneakin' Ingens."

Simon advanced to meet him, his relief so great that he could hardly speak.

"I thought that's what you were!" he stammered. The two men stood eying each other.

"'Pears like you've had a powerful hard tussle with these here woods," remarked the newcomer.

"Haven't had much to eat," admitted Simon, cautiously.

"Wal, now," said the stranger, "I've got a smart piece o' bear-steak in my pack, and I'd be willin' to have you jine up with me fur a bite."

Simon's dilated eyes were response enough to this invitation; together they crept back into his little covert; the dried-out bear-meat was produced from a leathern pouch slung around the stranger's neck, and Simon, snatching a piece, crammed his mouth, gulping down huge half-chewed pieces. The other watched him with sympathy, then started in on a piece of his own.

"I wuz jist huntin' a good place fur a sleep when you cracked them bushes an' my scalp-lock riz, I can tell you," he remarked, as they ate.

"An' I was aimin' to cotch a good fat squirrel, an' give him a roastin'," returned Simon.

"You'd have a tomahawk tryin' the strength of your skull afore you had it done to a turn. Woods is gettin' mighty skeery round here, an' I 'low we'll have a set-to with some o' the Shawanees afore the moon's full."

Simon continued to chew bear-meat.

"I've been goin' nights," he remarked, after a

14 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

while. "But I got plumb hungry, an' I couldn't sleep nowadays."

"How'd you lose your rifle?" inquired the other, noting Simon's lack of equipment. Simon's uneasy eyes and inability to frame a reply told a story to his experienced companion. He hastened to put his new-found friend at his ease.

"Started out from New Jersey with two, myself," he said, as if he had noticed nothing.

"I lost my grip on one when swimmin' a creek, a month back. You can bet your coonskins I'm a-takin' good keer o' this one. Back in the East I had a mite o' trouble with a neighbor—that's what started me this way. Didn't want to get mixed up in no law. I'm steerin' fur the Cheat an' a new settlement, where a man kin have his chance. My name's Jim Johnson."

Simon's heart warmed suddenly to this companion in misfortune. "I had trouble, too," he admitted. "I'm never a-goin' back!"

The other nodded.

"Then let's hitch up together," he invited. "I've got a horse spanceled a half mile back, packin' a little flour that'll come in handy afore we cross the mountains. Hed to leave him a good bit off so the sneakin' redskins wouldn't be onto me soon's they were onto him. I was lookin' fur jist such a place as this fur cover."

"Wal, there's room fur two, fur's I can see," observed Simon, "an' I reckon we can't do better than make good use o' the chance to sleep right now."

With almost incredible swiftness the two travelers dropped off to sleep, once they were stretched out on the bed of brown leaves which had eddied, year by year, into their retreat, as if in preparation for just such use. The peaks of the Alleghanies now loomed near; if sleep had not had so strong a claim upon Simon and his new friend they might have whiled away the day, vastly entertained by the play of the mighty shadows that moved endlessly across their broad faces.

Before the sun was hidden behind the farthest rim of the wilderness the sleepers awoke, and together set off for the point where Johnson had left his horse. They found the animal without difficulty, set him free, and paused long enough to finish the bear-venison.

"Reckon we'll hev to perch a turkey to-night," observed the older man. "I don't know how it is with you, but I'm powerful in need o' fresh meat. Fust good stoppin' place we find we'll build ourselves a fire, an' I'll see what Betsey here kin do fur us," stroking the long barrel of his rifle affectionately. Simon was heartily in accord with this plan, and his heart was almost light as

16 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

he and his companion took turns in leading the horse over the rough ground. Only when they reached a rocky section, where the going became uncertain in the darkness of the night, did Jim call a halt.

"Looks like a likely 'nuff spot round here," he said, out of his weeks of experience. Thereupon he gave the horse into Simon's keeping and disappeared into the dark. Simon heard the light shuffling of his feet as he climbed the bank above him, then the sound was lost in the distance. But an occasional stone, dislodged from an uncertain bed, rattled protestingly downward, and once a shower of dirt, dried leaves and moss told the watcher below that a foothold had given way. The underbrush was full of soft rustlings—the rush of tiny feet and the whir of wings as wild things, disturbed in their retreats, hurried to safer precincts.

When Jim spoke in a whisper, close beside him, Simon jumped, so absorbed had he been in the play of sound which fascinated him, in the almost soundless night woods. Jim had come from a direction straight ahead, and now his voice held an exultant note. He held up a heavy object in the gloom.

"Thar's luck fur ye! Ran right into a flock o' turkeys, all a-settin' in the trees comfortable as all git-out. Knocked this feller off with a

stick and twisted his neck afore he could let out a squawk. Come on, now, I know whar we're a-goin' to hev a fine supper."

He led the way for several yards straight ahead, fastened his horse in the thicket, and then turned off up the slope which rose more gently at this point. After considerable searching he found again the spot he had chosen for their camp—a narrow cleft between two huge boulders, just below the peak of the hill. With flint and steel a fire was soon achieved in the rocky gorge, Simon gathering a supply of wood, of kinds that would make the least smoke. The sides of their eerie chamber were pitted with small clefts and fissures, and it was in one of these that they built their fire, confident that the blaze could not be seen, from even a few yards' distance. Never had roast turkey tasted so good to Simon in all his life! The two made short work of the juicy bird. Between mouthfuls, Simon, warmed through and through by the fire, the food, and the companionship, told his story. Jim Johnson was sympathetic and reassuring.

"They'll never cotch ye—never in the world!" he exclaimed when Simon put an anxious question.

"Once ye git the other side o' the mountains, ye'll be as welcome as the fust warm day o' spring. Strong young fellers with muscles like

18 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

yourn ain't none too plentiful out thataway, I reckon."

A deep relief settled on Simon's heart.

"You won't give me away?" he begged. "You'll never tell my real name?"

"Make yore mind easy thar, son," returned the good-natured Jim. "We-all hev got things in our lives that the least said about, the better. Anyways, I hev. So we'll jist fergit about 'em an' start cl'ar in a new place. We're well past the neighborhood o' Warm Springs—an' that's the last settlement this side the mountains, I reckon. Ye kin be sartin they won't be a-chasin' ye any further than this!"

Simon was not so sure, but his companion's confidence had its effect. He began raking together dry leaves, in preparation for sound sleep. It was past midnight now, and a newly-risen wind was beginning to moan among the peaks and crevices that rose and fell around their little gorge. Jim had a blanket, and he generously offered a share of it to Simon.

"'Pears mighty like rain, to me," he said, listening to the rush of wind. "Let's see if we cain't crawl into one o' these hyar holes," and he began poking about among the rocks.

"Jist as I thought!" The search had revealed a long narrow opening, not large enough for a

man to stand up or even sit up, but wide enough for two to lie comfortably side by side.

"Hyar we'll lay, comfortable as two coons in a holler'tree. F'll 'er up with leaves."

Simon gladly transferred his pile of soft, dry leaves to the tiny cavern. Jim spread his blanket on top, placed at his head the pack containing the precious flour and a little coffee, which they were saving against a greater need, and laid his rifle just at the edge of his side of the blanket. A hatchet which he had carried at his waist he had given to Simon, and with this weapon at his hand, the youth lay down in an easy frame of mind. How lucky he was to have met this kindly-disposed traveler! For several minutes his thoughts, revelling in his unexpected good fortune, kept him awake. Here he was, dry and warm and fed, with a good weapon to use if danger threatened, and a fair surety of food during the journey that was to take him far from the danger of apprehension by any of Veach's friends. Outside the wind whined, gathered force, and suddenly seized the forest in an angry grip. Simon could hear the trees writhing, and the crash and crackle of defeated limbs that, powerless to withstand the onslaught, fell to the ground. Then came the spatter of rain on leaves—splosh! splat!—and Simon was asleep.

CHAPTER III

OVER THE MOUNTAINS

THE two wanderers slept on through a gray dawn that straggled between heavy clouds, past a murky noon, and woke late in the day to a dripping world. The rain had stopped, but the soaked forest exuded moisture, and a white mist was floating up from the valley which their snug retreat overlooked.

"I kinda hate to go out," remarked Jim, crouching gloomily at the door of the little cavern. "But we've had a heap o' rest and I reckon we'd better make tracks."

There was no jerked meat in the leathern pouch; Jim looked again to make sure. Moreover, there would be no dry fuel in the wet woods for days to come, so any game that chanced their way would have to go uncooked for a while. Nevertheless, they set off, in fairly good spirits; there were roots that could be eaten, and it would be easy to obtain fresh water; after a bit, when they could build a fire, they could have tea and make little flat cakes of their flour; squirrels were plentiful, and could be prepared for eating in short order.

With these cheering prospects for the immediate future, they pushed on—and on. Day after day went by, and became weeks, while the travelers, weary, footsore and half-starved, moved steadily through the forest, conquering the mountains, step by step. Two months had passed since Simon had fled from the sight of his prostrate enemy, and June was sweetening the wilderness with blossom and ripened berry, when Jim declared that the journey was nearing its end. Still lying concealed by day, they were making rapid progress at night, holding their course close to the Indian trail. It led them high upon a wind-swept peak, one brilliant, starlit night, and suddenly they glimpsed the valley below. Instantly they shrank back among the concealing trees, for the valley was alive with dark figures, whirling and leaping against the red glow of an immense fire. The wind, that had been blowing away from the two on the mountain, shifted, and the odor of burning wood came strongly to their nostrils, while a steady, monotonous chanting rose from the cup.

"The war dance!" Simon spoke in a whisper, as the shifting wind again carried away sound and smell, and left them only the evidence of their eyes. Jim nodded, soberly.

"Out for blood, by the looks o' them," he admitted. "An' we're mighty near white folks,

22 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

unless I'm more mistook than I ever wuz afore. Reckon you an' me will hev to do a little scoutin', an' find out what mischief they're a-plannin'."

Simon promptly agreed. Indian raids had been scarce, of late years, in the neighborhood from which he had come, but stories of desperate encounters along the border were plentiful enough. A thrill ran through his veins now as he gazed below, with fascinated eyes. Jim, meanwhile, was examining his rifle and the little store of bullets and powder that he carried. When all was ready, he led the way down the mountainside, picking a careful path among the dense underbrush. Simon's heart beat loudly as the hoarse voices of the savages came nearer. They dared not hurry, for fear of making a sound that would bring the whole pack down upon them. They descended in a wide circle, striving to put themselves between the Indians and the direction in which they believed the nearest settlement to lie. When they reached what they considered the point at which their flight should be resumed, they fastened the horse in the thicket and began to close in upon the warriors. Now they had to be doubly cautious; savage ears were keen—a breaking twig might betray their presence. Simon dropped upon his hands and knees—Jim, behind him, did the same—and they moved forward, a few inches at a

time, stopping and listening again and again. The chant rose and fell, in an unbroken chain of sound above their heads; there was no sign of suspicion on the part of the revellers. Only a few feet separated the two spies from the outermost fringe of warriors when they stopped, and, rising upon their knees, peered through a heavy screen of bushes.

For a moment Simon's eyes were dazzled by the glare of light and the furious prancing of an endless string of wild figures. Then he began to make out the objects before him. Several fires had been lighted in a row, he saw, and blazing up together they seemed one continuous stream of leaping flames. Waves of heat rolled against his face as he watched, and he could see the perspiration gleaming upon the bodies of the dancers. Close to the fire, standing out stark and terrible in its meaning, rose a tall pole. It was laden with various queer objects—snake-skins, a buffalo's tail, a dried turtle, oddly colored feathers—all stood out plainly against the glare. Totems! Simon knew that they represented the war budget of the party—they were proof, if proof were needed, that this was a war-party—but the gyrating figures were proof enough. Their bodies were smeared with paint, mostly black; their chests were adorned with the rude figures sacred to each individual warrior. They

24 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

waved aloft pine boughs to which scalps were attached. One huge fellow was dressed in a buffalo hide. The head, with great protruding horns, rested upon his head; the forepaws were drawn around his neck; the tail whipped grotesquely behind him. Round and round they went, fast and furious, their chant keeping time to the steady thump of a rude drum, made of deerskin stretched over a framework in the shape of a cask. There was one other musical instrument—a gourd, half filled with dried corn, rattled vigorously by a tall Indian who added his own voice to the uproar. Now and then a dancer would stop, run to a pile of dressed deer that lay at one side, slash off a huge piece with his knife, and, spearing it on the end of a stick, hold it over one of the small fires a little removed from the center of activity. A few minutes' broiling sufficed for the savage appetite; then the meat would be eaten, with tearing bites, and the fellow would return to the circle, or throw himself down beside the fire to rest.

Simon looked and listened until the blood sang in his ears. A touch on his arm brought him back to his companion, and he saw that Jim, not daring to utter a word, was backing gently away from the scene. He began to slip backward, too, gradually turning around so that he headed away from the war-party. They crept as slowly as

before, waiting between every forward movement, and only rose when they reached the spot where the horse was tied.

"What bothers me," observed Jim, "is to find out whether they're goin' after whites or are jist after some o' their own kind."

Simon shook his head doubtfully. "We can't find that out," he said. "Hadn't we better just hurry ahead and warn any white folks we come along of?"

Jim was thinking hard.

"Warn't more'n thirty or forty warriors in that party," he announced presently. "That's allowin' fur some bein' out on a hunt. Now, I reckon they ain't a-goin' after no big settlement, like that we're headed for at Ise's Ford, which I take it is the nighest; they'd need a bigger bunch 'n that to git past a real stockade, and I reckon they know it. Howsomever, it won't hurt us a mite to hurry along as fast as we kin, an' warn folks thet thar's a rip-roarin', rousin' war-party a little close fur real comfort."

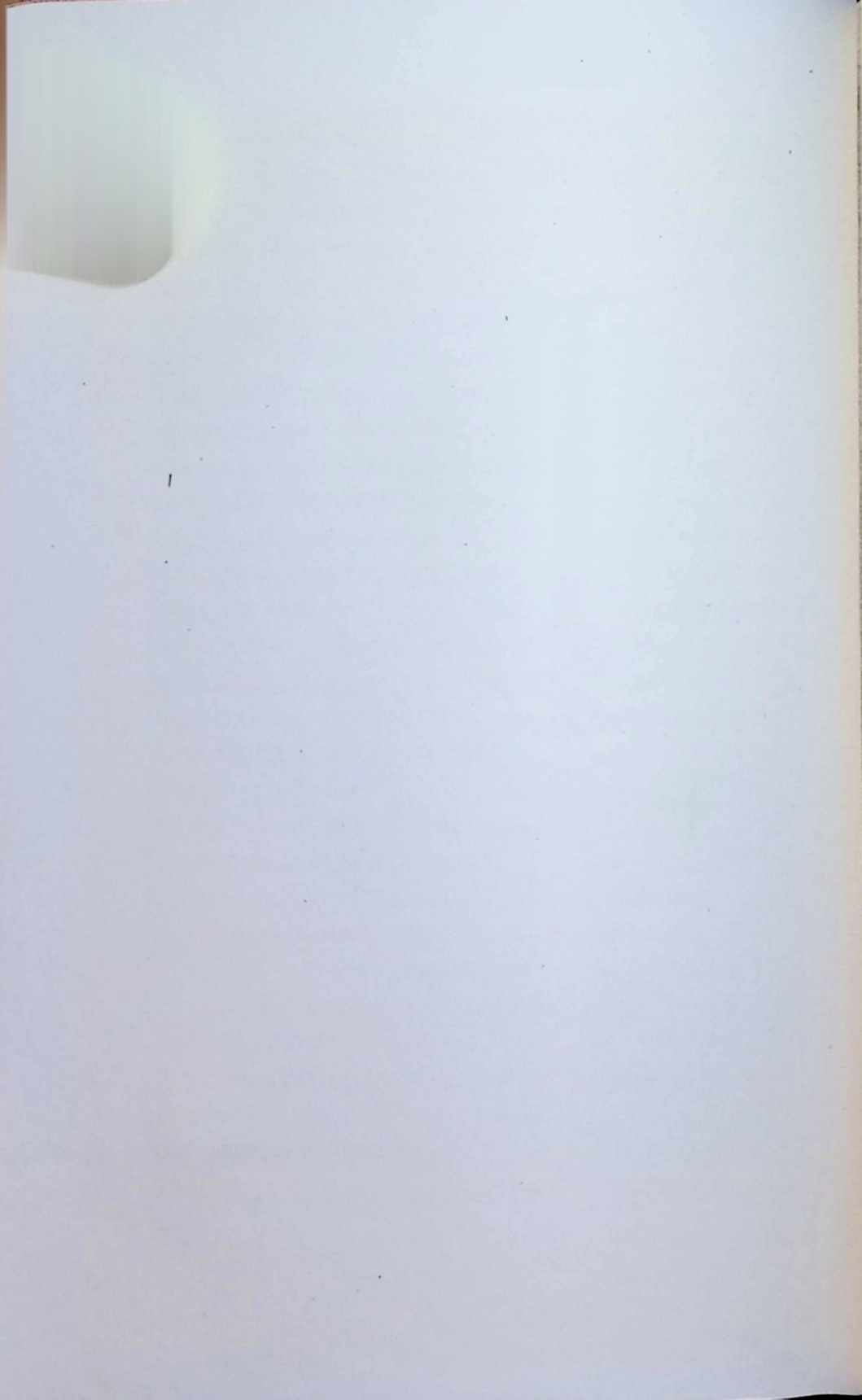
They hastened their steps accordingly, and, having struck a trail once more, made very good time through the forest. There was a light breeze, just enough to stir the trees constantly, so that their shifting boughs cast weird shadows back and forth across their path. The night deepened, the stars waned; it was the hour before

26 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

dawn, and they knew they would have to seek a hiding-place soon, for it would not be safe to travel in the woods after the sun came, with Indians so near at hand. Both were very tired; the excitement of the night, the hard going, and the fact that they had eaten nothing for several hours combined to make their feet a little heavy as they strove to gain a few more miles before daybreak. The trail crossed a small stream that had cut its bed between steep banks; they were about to take the abrupt slope to the shallow water when they heard a sound. They listened; yes, it was the pad of moccasined feet. Swiftly they drew the horse into the underbrush that grew thickly along the bank of the stream, and crouched beside him in the dense shadows. The footfalls came nearer, slowly. Two figures emerged from the darkness of the opposite bank, stood outlined for a moment against the now gray sky, and descended to the creek. They were hunters, carrying between them a large deer. Simon and Jim scarcely breathed, so close were they to the trail; the Indians came on, passed, and their footfalls grew fainter. Simon had crouched against a bramble in his haste; involuntarily he shifted his position a shade. But it was an ill-advised movement. He was well out on the overhanging bank already, the ground beneath had been worn away by heavy rains,



THERE WAS A SHARP REPORT, AND A BULLET WHISTLED OVER
SIMON'S HEAD



and the slight change in weight proved too much. With a splash that could be heard for many yards Simon found himself in the creek. An answer came promptly. The hunters, while not looking for a victim, were nevertheless of the war-party and imbued with the blood-lust of their fellows. With a whoop they dropped their burden and turned in their tracks. Simon was up and away before the last echo of their cry had died away; Jim, leaping to the horse's back, was after him like a flash.

"Run with us!" he cried, as he overtook Simon, and Simon grasped the strap that held the now almost empty pack-bags across the horse's back. Jim drove his heels into the animal's flank; the horse, scenting pursuit, plunged forward, Simon clinging desperately, half running, half dragged over the narrow trail. There was a sharp report, and a bullet whistled over Simon's head, cutting a leaf from a tree. A second shot, apparently from the other Indian's rifle, as there had been no time to reload, was also wasted, and buried itself in the path just behind them.

"Fraid we cain't beat 'em," muttered Jim.

"Ride in an' maybe we can hide," gasped Simon, straining with the effort to keep up with the horse.

Abruptly Jim drove the animal in among the trees; it chanced to be one of those forest spots

where underbrush was scarce, the trees rising tall and stately as if in a cultivated grove. It was safer to keep the horse here than to turn him loose, for there was no possibility of hiding for the present. Speed was the thing required. In and out among the mighty trunks dashed the horse, and Simon held close to his side, scraped against bark and low-growing branches, but stubbornly refusing to let go.

"Look thar!" exclaimed Jim suddenly, and Simon raised eyes blinded by blood from a dozen scratches. Before them lay a clearing—what had been a clearing—with a cabin in the middle. In the dim light they could see the door sagging on its hinges. Jim kicked vigorously; the horse responded with a fresh burst of speed, and together they all ripped through the tangled, tall grass that was reclaiming the opening. Behind them rose an exultant shout as the pursuers saw them driven to a cover which they were confident they could penetrate. Stooping, Jim rode right through the doorway. Simon slammed the door and seized the heavy bar that he knew must lie right inside.

"Whew—that thar wuz a close call! Lucky we didn't fergit to hurry!" Jim slid from the back of the horse and put an eye to the peephole that commanded a view of the way they had just traveled.

"Nothin' stirrin'," he continued, after a moment's scrutiny.

"Well, there won't be, I reckon," returned Simon, who was exploring the cabin. "They're not partic'lar anxious fur our scalps, I reckon, but seein's we're such easy prey, they just natch'ly think they might as well take what falls into their hands."

"Wal, thar won't be any doin's afore dark, you kin be plumb shore o' that," said Jim, withdrawing from his scrutiny of the landscape. "We might jist as well make ourselves to home."

He rummaged through the bags that his horse carried, and despite the woeful flatness of their sides, discovered a little of his precious flour in one and some tea in the other. Simon, meanwhile, had taken stock of the cabin's furnishings. The owners had not been gone long, apparently, for articles of clothing lay scattered about and rude dishes on the table showed that a meal had been eaten there not many days before. Evidently the family that lived there had been surprised, and had either been killed or succeeded in making their escape. There was a kettle on the floor half filled with water. Jim greeted the discovery with a shout of joy.

"We're a-goin' to eat, fust thing we do!" he exclaimed. "Reckon no Ingen kin stop us from doin' that."

30 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

With the gourd that hung beside the fireplace he dipped some of the water into a smaller kettle while Simon raked together the ashes of the burnt-out fire, and from the stock of firewood in a corner proceeded to build a new blaze. These labors were interrupted repeatedly by trips to the peepholes to see how the enemy was behaving, but the forest showed an innocent front under all their scrutiny. Jim poured his meal into the little kettle, and added pieces of venison. They had killed a deer some time back, and had spent the better part of one night cooking it and packing it away for future use. Soon the pleasing aroma that filled the cabin had the two friends fairly aching with hunger.

"Now, for the feast!" said Jim, proudly carrying the stew to the table when it was done. He divided it equally and together they fell to ravenously. The good food and the hot tea restored their spirits wonderfully, and afterward they took turns in sleeping, so that they might be fresh for the night attack which they were sure would come. The day wore on; Simon, who had the last watch, woke his companion as the sun was going down.

The fire had long since died out, and there was no more wood to replenish it. The water that was left would be needed for drinking purposes, in case the siege lasted beyond the night, so the

two contented themselves with eating their dry meat.

"Now, Simon, I reckon we're goin' to hev considerable to do to save our scalps," remarked Jim thoughtfully.

"Well, I intend savin' mine," retorted Simon. His companion nodded approval.

"We've each got a weapon, anyways," he replied. "An' we're two agin two, fur as I kin see."

Night settled swiftly over the forest, once the sun had slipped behind a distant peak. It was a dark night, too; the watchers at the peepholes soon admitted that they could see only a few yards' distance. But they continued to watch, nevertheless, for the stealthy, gliding forms that would come out of the black wall of trees that menaced them as they stared. A dozen times Jim examined his rifle to be sure that the priming was right; Simon's hatchet lay close by, where he could grasp it at the first warning.

"If they'd only strike an' be done with it!" murmured Simon, as the hours lagged.

"Feel as if I hed the rheumatiz myself, standin' still so long," answered Jim.

A warning hiss answered him, and he peered quickly through the peephole from which he had that moment turned away. But in that moment two crouching forms had slid around from the

32 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

back of the cabin. They were at the door, carrying a heavy log! Jim fired on the instant, missed, began reloading. The respite gave the savages time; they rushed against the door with all their strength. A hinge gave way, and the door sagged. Knowing that they had to act before the single gun was reloaded (they guessed that there was but one, since only one shot had been fired), they plunged through the opening. But Jim already had his rifle raised; the flash of the powder was only a breath before the whirl of Simon's hatchet; his long arm had reached past Jim, from behind, and struck down the second Indian before he had tried to cross the threshold.

"Quick work, that," remarked Jim, cheerfully, stooping to remove their rifles from the grasp of the dead savages. They possessed themselves also of the powder and bullets that their foes carried, and added their tomahawks to their supply of weapons. Then, fearing that their shots had been heard by other wandering redmen, they led the horse from the cabin and set off rapidly through the woods. A few days later, worn from strain and hurry, and without having stopped to build a fire on the way, they limped into the little settlement of Ise's Ford, on the Cheat River. Their story of the Indian encampment was received with grave faces and prompt reënforcement of the stockade. The sun had been up only

a short time when they arrived. Breakfasts were in preparation in every home in the settlement. Simon and Jim were invited into one of the largest cabins, where a motherly woman was turning a johnny-cake on a clean ash board before the fire. It was with spirits full of thankfulness and appetites ravenous for a real meal that they took their places at the table. Only once did Simon's heart miss a beat as he ate; it was when a lank settler, with keen eyes, asked a question.

"What's your name, son?" he said.

Simon raised his eyes, meeting those of his companion of these many long weeks. But what he read there reassured him.

"Simon Butler," he replied, and reached for another wedge of corn bread.

CHAPTER IV

THE CANE-LAND BECKONS

“**T**HAR, Sharp-eye, I reckon some o’ them pigeons would make a mighty good tastin’ stew fur supper.”

A middle-aged trapper, seated beside Simon, pointed to a flying cloud above their heads that completely hid the sun. Simon, the trapper, whose name was Jacob Greathouse, another seasoned hunter, William Grills, and two brothers by the name of Mahon, were floating down the Ohio in a clumsy but tough dugout. They were on their way to hunt bear in the unbroken wilderness, that, for the most part, lined the banks of that tortuous stream. Several months had passed since Simon had reached the little settlement on the Cheat—months in which he had established a reputation as a marksman that had won him the name of “Sharp-eye.” To be a good marksman in the backwoods was no distinction in the sharp-shooting days of 1771, for the man who failed to shoot his squirrel in the head at two hundred yards was an object of contempt. But not a rifleman at Ise’s Ford could equal Simon’s skill at the frontier game of “snuffing the candle”

—putting out a lighted candle with a bullet, in other words. Simon never merely fanned the flame as many another good marksman sometimes did, and he never cut into the base of the candle-wick. His aim was the truest in the settlement, and his shot had never been known to miss its mark. Naturally he had been welcomed in the little frontier station from the very first—the more that the Indian scare had hung over the town for many weeks. But as time went by this fear had been dissipated, for no hostile move had been made by the redmen, and it was assumed that the war-party which Simon and his friend Johnson had seen was bound on a mission of revenge against some of their own bands. Once in the little fortified town Johnson and Simon had gone separate ways, for Simon was much younger and his interests lay with the younger men of the settlement. He had rejoiced when invited to join in this hunting expedition, the first that had gone out from the town since his arrival. Now he sat, eager-eyed, alert, in the rough craft, wearing the dress, which, with his rifle, represented his earnings for labor around the fort during the past months.

No copper-hued native of the forest blended more perfectly with its noble aisles than did Simon, in his costume of fringed buckskin, tanned and dyed the green-yellow of the inside

36 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

bark of the walnut tree. Long leggings, with the Indian breech-clout, a strip of buckskin fringed at each end and drawn through the belt back and front, were half hidden under the hunting-shirt that was held in at the waist by a wide belt, serving to support the broad knife without which no true hunter traveled. On his feet were the worked moccasins which he and his kind had borrowed from the Indians, and on his head was a coonskin cap. He had his shot-pouch slung around his neck, and his curving powder-horn swung from his waist. Beside him lay his rifle—the stock short and slender, the butt scooped out, the barrel, four feet long, of thick, soft iron. When standing, this gun reached his chin, and it weighed fifteen pounds.

The great cloud of pigeons overhead, to which Jacob Greathouse had called Simon's attention, was no uncommon sight. They traveled in immense flocks, hovering over the woods and roosting among the trees at night, sometimes crowding, jostling and packing in such numbers that branches were broken and leaves stripped from their boughs as if a mighty wind had passed. Now Simon looked up at the gray mass above, and lifted his rifle to rest on his shoulder.

"If you-all want pigeon stew fur supper, I reckon you kin have it," he remarked, sighting carefully along the barrel. The rear sight was

a flat bar, placed fifteen inches in front of the breech of the barrel, and finely notched. Simon himself had put the finishing touches on this notch, working away with steady patience, so that he might draw a perfect bead with the low bone crescent of the fore sight. The rifle was perfect for a range of from one to two hundred yards, but the pigeon cloud was higher than that—all of three hundred yards above the heads of the men in the boat.

"Too long a range, Sharp-eye," remarked Grills, as Simon's trigger clicked. A pigeon dropped, in a whirl of feathers, just outside the boat.

"Through the head, by the eternal coonskin!" cried Jacob. But Simon had reloaded with lightning-like rapidity. A second report rang out over the still forest—a third. Only when ten pigeons were floating lifelessly on the troubled waters of the Ohio did Simon put down his gun, and he watched with a quiet, good-humored smile about his mouth as the others fished them out.

"Bust my buckskins, if that air warn't the most ticklish shootin' I ever seed," chuckled one of the men.

Simon's blue eyes danced at the compliment. He was justly proud of his marksmanship, and

38 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

not above an honest delight in being praised. But "Oh, shucks!" was all he said.

Next day, Simon, lying in the bottom of the boat and gazing at the cloudless sky, beheld a thin ribbon of smoke curling above the tree-tops.

"That's too much smoke for an Indian camp," he observed. "'Pears to me we gettin' near a settlement—what did you say was the name o' that next one?"

"Province's Settlement," returned James Mahon. "That's just about where it lays, too. We'll put in thar fur the night."

The shadows were lengthening as the little craft floated into the bay which formed the natural harbor for the tiny river settlement, huddling—a small oasis of civilization—between the waters of the Ohio and the black woods marching over the hills. Simon and his companions were greeted as news-bearers. A crowd gathered around them that night as they sat before the fire in one of the cabins. Among them was a trader, a wiry, keen-eyed fellow of the breed who wandered far into the wilderness, even before the pioneer himself had dared to venture so far. To their kind the Indian was for the most part unopposed; bearing bright beads and gayly colored stuffs which he offered in exchange for skins, the trader was an unfailing lure to the

redmen, and they thoroughly enjoyed bartering for days before an exchange was effected.

When the party from Ise's Ford had told all the news of their own region, the returned trader told tales of the Indians he had met in his wanderings.

"Here's a story I got from a Mingo," he remarked, in the course of the talk. "They're mad for gold—that lot. They'd took a white man prisoner—quite an elderly feller he must be, from what they said. Anyways, they were powerful anxious to get rid o' him again, and they told me where he could be had and I kinda think they're willin' to let him go cheap, too!"

The two Mahon boys leaned forward eagerly.

"Did you see him?" they asked together.

"Nary a peek I got. But I asked them what he looked like, an' one of the chaps thought a long time, a-watchin' me with his beady eyes, an' finally he says, pointin' to his nose: 'Heap big.' Then I asked him how tall he was, an' he measured a place just below my ear, an' then, out o' the goodness o' his heart, I suppose, he showed me how he walked, and I reckoned he must hev the rheumatiz."

"Thet's dad!" cried James Mahon.

The trader sat up sharply. "Yore pap missin'?" he inquired.

"He's been gone a year," returned the boy.

40 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

"We warn't skeered o' the Indians. Uster hev 'em in for dinner an' all when they come our way."

"We hed a cabin on McGary's Run," put in the other lad.

"Yes," went on the other. "We wuz fools enough to think we could be friends with the red varmints. Then one night we wuz settin' round the fire, just ez we're a-doin' now. There came a knockin' at the door, and a voice calls out: 'Who keeps house?'"

"I wuz fur openin' it right off, thinkin' thet it wuz a white man," said the other boy, "but mother says, 'No'—she seemed to hev a feelin' thet somethin' was wrong. An' she wuz right. We didn't open the door, an' it turned out that it wuz Indians out thar, an' not friendly ones either. They tried every way to git in, and when they found they couldn't, they fired the cabin. Shot burnin' arrers into the roof, an' crept close to the wall and started a blaze down in one corner. We stood it ez long ez we could, an' tried to put the fire out, an then at last we hed to go out an' face their fire. I took mother an' was helpin' her over the fence when she wuz shot dead. But I got the sarpint that done it! Jim here got away jist ez I did, but dad disappeared. We reckoned he'd been taken captive, but we never knowed whether he was alive or dead."

"Seems mighty likely this man is yore pap," remarked the trader thoughtfully. The two Mahons agreed eagerly and pressed him for information about the place of his captivity. The trader advised them to follow the Ohio to the Mingo town which stood on its shores, about seventy miles from Fort Pitt, where Pittsburgh now stands. Jacob Greathouse and William Grills declared their intention of joining the young men in their search, abandoning the hunting trip. Simon was greatly disappointed and said as much, gloomily, to a couple of weather-worn trappers who happened to be sitting near.

"Wal now, I'll tell you," replied one of these, Tom Yager by name, "I wuz thinkin' o' goin' on a long trip myself. I wuz riz by the Ingens, which in course you didn't know, hevin' never clapped eyes on me afore. But I wuz captured when jist a lad and I lived with 'em a heap o' time. Onct they took me along when they went to Kain-tuck-ee. Thar's a likely spot, now! The greatest place this side o' sundown!"

Slim Strader, the other trapper, an older man, very bronzed and thin, grinned at Simon.

"Hyar him! Hyar him!" he jeered. "He's been a-crowin' about Kain-tuck-ee ever since I knowed him, and that's a good many years back. Always a-wantin' to go back to the land whar the trees stand back an' give the grass a chanct!"

42 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

"It's true, jist the same," asserted Yager. "Fur ez the eye kin see thar's miles an' miles o' long grass an' all the valleys air abloom with the purtiest flowers you ever see."

"An' don't fergit the buffler all a-standin' round patient-like, jist waitin' to be shot, an' the elk an' the b'ar, not to mention the fat wild turkeys jist ez plentiful ez chickens in a farm-pen," put in the mocking Strader.

"Every word of it's true!" cried Yager. "Laff all you want to, Slim Strader, but jist you come along o' me an' I'll show you game that'll make your mouth water."

"Blame me, if I don't believe I'll take you up on that!" exclaimed the other.

Simon's heart thumped. "I'll go, too," he said, eagerly.

"Thet's the stuff," cried Yager, slapping his knee. "Hey, you-all," he called, raising his voice to the rest, "take a good look at we-uns! We're a-goin' to Kain-tuck-ee to shoot more buffler than you-all ever saw!"

The announcement was greeted by cheers, and was the signal for the recounting of tales of adventure which had floated back to the older settlements from the "Dark and Bloody Ground." It was the Indians' own name for the fertile region where Kentucky now stands, so called because in its lovely glades the redmen

had spilled each others' blood for centuries. Northern and Southern Indians, moon after moon, wore war-trails across the flowery vales, or roamed the wooded slopes taking the game that abounded in its uninhabited stretches.

Next day the intrepid band of three began preparations for their momentous trip.

"I rec'lect we had to cross the Ohio," Yager said, thoughtfully.

"Then the fust thing we'll need is a canoe," said Simon.

"Thet's jist what we'll need, Sharp-eye," returned Yager. "How'd you-all come to think of it?"

Simon took the banter good-naturedly.

"The idea popped into my head the minute you mentioned the Ohio," he admitted. "Things come to me like that—sudden."

"Wal, sence the two o' you ain't got nothin' better to do than to set chewin', I reckon it's up to me to go out an' do the work," put in Strader.

"Hold yore horses," retorted Yager. "Don't be in such an all-fired hurry. I reckon we got to decide what kind of a boat we aim to take, afore we start in a-makin' it."

"I lean toward a hollered-out log," Slim submitted.

"Yes, that's the easiest," his friend agreed, "but I reckon we'd better take our time and git

44 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

started right. Now, Simon Sharp-eye here, is in favor of a long beaut of a birch-bark canoe, that'll do fur carryin' if we hev to. An' I'm mighty near to agreein' with him myself. O' course, we maybe won't need to do any carryin', but we might ez well be prepared in case."

So the building of a birch-bark canoe was decided upon as the first step toward the promised land of Kain-tuck-ee. A straight, beautiful tree was selected, and a vertical incision made from the base of the trunk to a point at the height of Simon's head. Being the tallest, he was chosen as a standard for the new craft, because, as Yager said, they wanted "one with room to lay down in, jist in case we git sleepy." With the aid of their knives they carefully removed the bark.

"My," said Yager, admiringly, gazing at the smooth, shining strips as they lay on the ground. "that's ez fine a piece o' work ez ever I did."

"Wal, you didn't do it all," responded Slim, testily, "an' kindly remember that thar's a few more things to be done in the way o' frames an' sich-like afore you stop to pat yoreself on the back."

Thin pieces of cedar were cut next, and fashioned into a framework which should support the outside covering of birch. Simon gathered the long, tough fibrous roots of the balsam while the

other two shaped the framework, and worked over them with his fingers until they were as flexible as rope. With these the pieces of birch-bark were sewn together, and, when the bark had been cut into the proper pattern, it was fastened to the framework with pieces of the root.

"Wal, she is a beaut," admitted Strader, when the slender canoe finally lay before them, in all its grace. "Now a touch o' pitch, and she'll be waterproof ez a duck."

The friendly spruce tree furnished the pitch, which, when heated, made an excellent substance for calking all the seams and cracks where the water might seep in. The canoe was a beauty, as Strader had said. They turned it over, looking for bubbles in the pitching. Whenever they found one, they put their lips over it, and sucked sharply, to see if the air came through. They tested and reënforced; patched here, improved there, until, from gunwale to bow, they could find no flaw in their airy craft. They put their hands upon each others' shoulders and sang, as they walked back to the settlement for supper that night, for their hearts were full of their adventure-boat that lay hidden in the woods.

CHAPTER V

LOST IN THE WOODS

THE October mist was a floating dew in the new sunlight next morning when the three adventurers stripped the concealing foliage from their ship and carried it to the river's edge. They placed it on the water, and it danced on the little shining river waves, dipping with every ripple of wind, as the men adjusted supplies of ammunition, jerked beef, blankets and weapons. Frail as it looked, it was a safe craft for five times the weight of a single man; it received its owners with a gentle plashing against the waters, and bore them gayly out upon the broad bosom of the winding river.

"We'll sail down the river fur a few days, an' ez soon ez we reach the spot where the Ingens used to cross, we'll put in," observed Tom Yager confidently.

Slim was doubtful. "Air ye sure ye'll know the spot?"

"O' course. Tain't likely ez I'd fergit it. Thar's not another piece o' country like Kain-tuck-ee, an' when I see it I'll know it."

The sun marched higher and higher in the

sky, the little boat was carried swiftly on the strong current, and at every bend of the river all three hunters leaned forward, expecting a sight of the cane-land. There was forest in Kentucky, Yager had admitted, but the miles of rich cane-brakes, where game could be easily stalked, formed the great allurements of the region.

"The buffler hev beat down big trails thet air powerful easy to foller. Jist git onto one, and you'll hev enough meat fur a right smart spell," he assured his companions.

"Don't seem to be no break in the trees 'round here." Simon was gazing at the unbroken wall of forest that lined the river on either bank. Giant trees towered far above their heads; where they grew closely, they stretched upward for a hundred and fifty feet; where the neighbor trees stood slightly aloof, unscarred sycamores ran to girth—six, eight, even twelve and fifteen feet around.

"Thar's more to see than jist buffler an' elk," Yager affirmed, when one or the other of his companions expressed disbelief in the land for which they were searching. "Thar's salt springs—the folks back home would be glad o' them. An' round them I seed strange sights—bones o' critters the like o' which none of us ever did see, alive. I reckon they're the bones o' buffler thet

48 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

lived years an' years ago—some o' them air nigh onto a quarter-mile long!"

This was too much for Slim and Simon; they had only half believed in Tom's stories of the wonderful fertile valleys across the Ohio; now they were sure he was drawing on his imagination, just to impress them. They jeered him into a sulky silence.

Meanwhile the river carried them on. With the coming of night they pulled their canoe ashore, and camped on the river's edge. A week went by in this fashion, and then another. The wilderness still hemmed them in with a wall of autumnal red and gold. Patience finally gave way.

"See here, Tom, you're plumb mistook about this hyar Kain-tuck-ee," said Slim, at the end of the second week. "Whar it is I don't know—but I reckon if thar is any sich country, it ain't anywheres eround hyar. I'm not goin' any further."

Tom Yager was downcast.

"We shore passed it in the night—I didn't want to keep on goin' after dark, only you-all would do it. But I reckon it ain't any further down the river. I'm solid sure we use' to cross into the cane-land afore this."

"Wal, we're goin' back, anyhow." This from Slim, a little sorry for his friend in his great disappointment. As for himself, he had always

known that there could be no such perfect hunting ground as Tom had described—very likely he had dreamed it.

The way back was hard pulling against the strong current. They stopped frequently to rest, and to search the surrounding country. They followed smaller rivers that emptied into the Ohio, searching their shores, in the hope that the rich cane country, of which Yager was so sure, was not entirely a dream. While they searched they were not idle; they followed the print of the fleeing deer; they set their traps and their piles of skins grew day by day.

One day Simon sighted a fat buck making off through an oak grove. Shouting the news to his companions, he gave chase, and after a few hundred yards, made a kill. He butchered his prize and hung it on a bough, out of the reach of wolves, and went on. Luck was with him that day. He surprised a doe at a spring, shot her through the heart, and disposed of her body in the same way. Now it was time to turn back; Simon knew that, but his blood was racing—success had not smiled on him for several days before. He continued to wander until he discovered the footprints of a bear; that was all he needed to fire him.

"A big feller!" he exclaimed, examining the print in the soft earth beside a stream. The trail

50 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

was plain and easy; he followed. Mile after mile slipped away beneath his nimble feet, but fast as he went, the bear went faster, or seemed to. The fact was, the print was several hours old, but the cool earth had retained it so well that it looked new.

The sun, sullen behind a yellow haze, was slipping behind the woods when Simon regretfully abandoned the bear he had been so sure was his. He muttered dire threats against the pesky varmint in case he should meet him at some future time, as he turned back toward the place they had chosen for a camp. The deer he had secured would be safe until the morrow, he knew, and the other two would return with him and help to dress the meat and bring it in. The young hunter was tired, and his step was a little heavy. His eyes were less alert than they had been some hours earlier—there were creatures of the forest waiting for just such a situation. Simon walked on, as rapidly as he could, hoping to make the camp before darkness fell. He was passing beneath a tree when he felt, rather than saw, danger above his head. He leaped aside just in time to evade a creature that sprang from a bough, and, furious at missing its mark, crouched three feet away, with lashing tail. It was a panther. Simon had just time to realize that there was no time to use his rifle, when the animal

sprang again. Instinctively the hunter's hand grasped his tomahawk, wrenching it from his belt as the panther leaped. He jumped aside once more, swinging the weapon with all his strength as he did so. The panther missed him by a few inches; his hatchet caught the animal on the shoulder. Infuriated by the blow, it fastened huge teeth in Simon's leg. Writhing with pain, the lad raised his hatchet, let it fall; again and again, slashing, with slipping strength, at the fierce beast that would not loose its hold. With a final desperate effort, Simon concentrated his glazing vision on the animal's head, lifted the tomahawk again, and struck squarely, splitting the panther's skull. Man and beast went down together; the panther dead, the hunter faint from pain and loss of blood.

It seemed hours to Simon that he lay in a heap on the ground, while the agony in his torn leg throbbed and glowed. But he was strong, with the strength of youth and a life in the backwoods; it was really but a few moments before he was on his feet, swaying as he searched for his tomahawk and his rifle. The sun was entirely gone now, but he meant to reach camp if he could. He had no food with him and he needed it badly. At a narrow stream he stopped and bathed his injured leg, and the cold water refreshed him so that he set off at a smart pace on the other side.

Layer upon layer of decayed vegetation had enriched the region through which he traveled until the thickets that grew from this fertile bed were rank and wild, and bound together by vines that were stout and tough as cables. Where there was a break in the trees the summer grass had sprung high and luxuriant; now, in the fall, it lay dead, matted and tangled. The rain that sometimes fell in torrents in that section was slow to leave such masses; in some places summer rains and winter snows had lingered so long among the rank grasses that they choked and died, and new growths rose on top. But for several yards—many yards in some spots—there was no secure footing. The beasts of the forest knew that—they were never caught napping!

The complete dark of a moonless night in the wilderness had settled around Simon, but he kept on his way. He could not be far from the camp, he thought, and gave the cry that had been agreed upon as a signal between the three friends—the howl of a wolf, repeated three times. But only an echo from a distant hill replied to the whining note as it died away on the night air. Suddenly Simon was angry. He had been a great fool, he told himself, to wander off so far. He plunged ahead, reckless of the hurt leg.

His feet sank deeply into the soft earth, but Simon was beyond caring for slight discomforts.

He felt vaguely that he was near a river, lifted his feet, forced them in and out of the sticky grasses. Suddenly one foot sank to the ankle, he jerked; both feet seemed gripped by a relentless force. He floundered, struggled, gripped the tough weeds, tried to pull himself upward. With every effort he sank a little lower. Horrified realization swept over him. He was caught in a quicksand!

The knowledge sharpened Simon's wits, dulled by pain and fatigue. He must not struggle, if he would save himself—rather, if he were to be saved by his friends—for he knew that no power of his own would free him from the monster that held him so firmly clutched, and meant to devour him, inch by inch. He threw out his arms and stood as motionless as he could; then, lifting his voice with all his strength, gave the wolf signal. As before, the echo answered. Simon waited, repeated the cry. Once again his voice rang out, soaring above the trees, fading into nothingness on the damp air. The answering howl that would have meant rescue failed to come. The lad's voice grew hoarse, his throat was sore, the whine of the wolf sometimes rose to a scream, but he never moved, standing rigidly, with arms outstretched as far as they would go on the treacherous surface of the bog.

Slowly the Thing that held his feet sucked him

down—he could scarcely feel himself going, but he knew every quarter inch that it gained. Now it had crept to his knees; it had been halfway there when he ceased to struggle. It was creeping—creeping, above the knees, reaching for the thighs. But as often as his breath came back, he gave the howl of the wolf, again, and again.

Was that the echo—or a voice that answered him? Dazed by cold and fear, he wondered if he had really heard a reply. He raised his voice once more, but its note was feeble now. It almost seemed as if the echo was louder—he was losing his senses—

“Sharp-eye! Simon Butler! Answer, son! whar air ye?” Simon’s head, that had drooped on his breast, lifted a little. He put his remaining strength into one despairing word:

“Slim!”

It was enough. Guided by that last cry, Slim and Tom threaded their swift way to the edge of the quicksand. The moon had come out, partly, from behind the clouds. A darker blur appeared on the dark surface of the marsh.

“Steady, lad, steady!” The experienced woodsman had taken in the situation almost before he had caught sight of the helpless figure. Slim tested the ground cautiously with one foot.

“Hold on, lad, we’ll hev ye out in a jiffy!” as

Simon, seeing help so near, made a sudden convulsive effort.

"Here, Tom, this is the edge."

Yager approached the spot Slim indicated, as the older man lowered him carefully until he was flat upon the surface of the bog. Tom knelt at the edge and grasped the other's feet.

"Put out your arms!" The sharp command from Strader penetrated to Simon's reeling brain; he obeyed. Slim's long arms fell just short.

"Ease 'er up a bit, Tom," he grunted.

Yager leaned forward; Slim wriggled slowly toward Simon, strained his arms to their utmost limit of length, grasped Simon's wrists. The mud was at the boy's hips now. Strader began wriggling backward, Yager pulled with all his strength. Inch by inch, just as the quicksand had claimed him, it gave its man back; the steel of Tom Yager's arms pulled steadily, slowly.

Simon lay, a mass of mud, at the safe rim of the bog, unable to stir, while his two friends pulled clean grass with which to wipe his face free of the great clods of earth that had sought to drag him down. When they brought him water to drink he revived, and a few pieces of dried meat from the small supply that Slim had carried that day soon completed the work. He was

56 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

nearly his normal self by the time they had made him a bed of dry leaves, for to return to their camp that night was out of the question. While Simon slept, Slim and Tom took turns at watching.

CHAPTER VI

SIMON MAKES A FRIEND

FOOD for the rifle, however carefully doled out, cannot last long in a wilderness where game is plentiful and the hunter ever on the look-out. Simon and his friends retrieved their bullets when they could, imbedded as they sometimes were in the animals they shot, but gradually the precious stock of ammunition—powder grains and little leaden balls running sixty or so to the pound—dwindled down to a dangerously tiny store. Simon, leaving his companions in the rude camp they had established on the bank of the Great Kanawha River, paddled alone down to the Ohio, and made his way up the big river to Fort Pitt. He had furs enough to exchange for all the ammunition he and his friends would need for months to come.

Fort Pitt, a rough frontier settlement at the forks of the Ohio, had for years been a strategic military post and the basis for fierce struggles among the whites themselves, as well as the hub of the trouble between white men and red in the Ohio valley. The French and English had fought for its possession less than fifteen years

58 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

before; the French, who held it at that time, called it Fort Duquesne; in 1758 the English had seized it, renamed it Fort Pitt, and secured for themselves the whole Ohio basin thereby. Now the spot was being claimed by two states; Pennsylvania declared that considerable of the territory along the Ohio River belonged to her, and Virginia was equally firm in her claim to Fort Pitt, and considerable territory to the east of it. Residents in the vicinity were divided in their allegiance, and those who considered themselves Virginians were bitter toward those who claimed to be residents of Pennsylvania. In addition to this ill-feeling between the white settlers, an active hostility between the whites and the Indians—the Shawnees and the Mingos—was growing day by day and threatened to burst into open warfare.

It was into this center of unrest that Simon paddled his fur-laden canoe in the early spring of 1773. One Simon Girty, an interpreter between white traders and Indians, told him how matters stood.

"There's rights and wrongs to both sides of it, that's all I can say," he declared. He was a tall, wiry fellow, ten years older than Simon Kenton, and in the bronze of his skin and unvarying expression bore a strong resemblance to the Indians.

"If you take away the Ingens' huntin' grounds, they can't live. An' that's what we're a-doin'. The redskins air gittin' tarnal mad at the whites, an' small blame to 'em, say I."

The younger man was disposed to argue the point.

"Ingens are Ingens," he said. "Dirty, skulkin', critters; the sooner we're rid o' them the better. They'd kill a white man every time."

"I've got consider'ble agin the Ingens myself," Girty admitted. "Thar was my dad now; he was killed by a red snake named The Fish. But a friend o' his got 'im! John Turner, his name was. Afterward married mom. The red devils never fergot it, either. Five years or so after, when the French an' Ingens was fightin' together agin us, a bunch o' them captured the hull fam'ly of us. They tied John Turner to a black post, an' danced around him, a-hootin' and a-yellin'. I was fifteen year old, an' I was thar! They made a big fire, and stuck their gun-barr'ls in it, and when they was red-hot, they run 'em through 'im."

"That must've finished him quick."

"It did not. He lived for three hours. Fin'ly they scalped 'im, an' then, seein' that he had a few more gasps left, they lifted up a little boy an' he finished 'im off with a hatchet."

"An' didn't they do anythin' to you?"

60 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

"They carried us off—me an' three brothers, mom and her baby. Then they divided us up among 'em. I went with the Senecas, one o' my brothers went to the Shawnees, an' another to the Delawares."

"Reckon you saw some sights," said Simon, enviously.

"I larnt consider'ble about the Ingens," Girty admitted. "I kin talk Seneca language, an' that's how I come to be workin' here. I help the fellers that air buyin' furs from the Ingens."

"How'd you ever escape?"

"Didn't, fur three years," was the laconic reply. "Reckon not many git away less'n the Ingens want 'em to. They got up a treaty with the English just at that time, an' we-all was delivered up here at Fort Pitt, an' here I've stayed."

"But didn't they use you bad when you were with them?" Simon persisted.

"No, I got no fault to find with 'em fur the way I was treated. Hed a good time, altogether. Good huntin', good eatin'—nothin' else to do! Sometimes I wish I was an Ingen myself. Roamin' around in the woods all day—draggin' home a deer or a b'ar at night an' lettin' the squaws do the skinnin' an' the cookin'—it's a fine, free way o' livin'."

Finding in Girty the same fondness for the

chase that he himself possessed, Simon induced his new friend to accompany him on short hunting trips around the fort. The Indian trade had fallen off at this time; bad feeling had driven the redmen from their friendly camps outside the little stronghold, and sent instead marauding bands to harass the farms in the neighborhood.

There was but little game in the region, for the increasing numbers of white settlers had driven most of it further west. Girty and Simon were despondent, returning home one night after a day's hunt that had brought no rewards. They went to bed grumblingly in a cabin within the fort. Simon was awakened by a stealthy footstep, just as the darkness of night was fading into a gray dawn. He opened one cautious eye and observed his friend lifting down his rifle from the antlers of an elk which served to hold it above the fireplace.

"What is it?" whispered Simon.

"Hear that turkey gobblerin'? I'm goin' to get 'im."

"Turkeys hev a queer way o' shootin' sometimes. Look out or he'll be takin' first pop," Simon warned him.

Girty laughed and went out. He crept cautiously toward the woods from which the sound of gobbling continued to come—with a warning to be quiet to the sentry, as he passed the gate.

62 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

Meanwhile Simon, listening sharply to the noise the turkey was making, heard a second bird begin to gobble, as vigorously as the first.

"I don't like it—birds speakin' to each other," he muttered, and followed his friend as far as the gate of the fort. There in the dim light, he could see Girty stalking with infinite precaution toward the dark line of trees. Suddenly he stood upright. Crack! The report of his rifle had not died away before another sounded, followed closely by a popping of guns on every side. Simon could hear the whistle of many bullets, and he ran forward a few steps, just in time to aim squarely at an Indian, who, a pace behind Girty, had lifted his tomahawk to dispatch him. The redskin fell with Simon's bullet in his heart, just as a rifle spat from a nearby stump. Simon caught his friend in his arms as he swayed toward him, hurled him through the gate, and slammed it shut. The sentry smashed the bar into position and running to a loophole began firing toward the woods. Instantly the whole fort was alive with men, running to vantage points, loaded rifles in their hands.

But there was silence in the woods now. What had at first appeared to be the beginning of a real attack dissolved into a mere mischievous effort on the part of a handful of the redmen to entice someone from the fort to within killing

distance. This was established when, after an hour's wait, a party of scouts went out and scoured the woods nearby. There had been but a half dozen Indians in the party, they reported, and they had fled in great haste for some distance, as their trail showed. Then they had taken to covering their tracks, and succeeded so well that the men from the fort were unable to pursue them further.

Meanwhile Simon had helped one of the women bind up Girty's shoulder, where the bullet, shot from close range behind the stump, had passed clear through.

"Ten steps closer to the woods, an' you'd a had plenty more bullets through you," he told his friend.

"I reckon I know that," chuckled Girty. "I was pretty near before I could see anythin', an' then I made out an old cock a-roostin' on a bough. I didn't want to scare 'im, so I crept mighty soft, an' when I got a little nearer, I give a quick glance an' up riz my scalp-lock I kin tell you! It warn't no turkey on that limb! I had to do somethin' quick. I just raised my gun, an' as the Ingen tumbled off'n his perch I turned an' run!"

"It wuz a hot race, too," Simon admitted. "You didn't fergit to hurry an' no mistake!

64 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

Lucky I wuz thar or you'd be bald-headed, most likely."

"That's so, Simon," said Girty, soberly, "an' I won't fergit to remember that you were right on hand an' saved my hair."

CHAPTER VII

ATTACKED

“**H**IT shore looks ez if the Ingens wuz on the war-path,” Slim Strader admitted, when a few weeks later Simon was back in the little camp on the Great Kanawha, and was telling his two friends of the ominous events at Fort Pitt. It was twilight of a March evening, and the three hunters were huddled close to a small fire in front of their rough lean-to—a sort of half cabin, with the back of logs, the sides of poles shingled with hemlock boughs, and a roof of poles, boughs, skins and moss, all cunningly arranged to keep out the wind and rain. Simon, with a calico shirt showing under his hunting-shirt of buckskin, which was proof to any woodsman that he had been visiting a settlement, thought this little retreat in the wilderness as snug a home as he would ever wish to own. The other two, however, glanced around uneasily at the dark forest wall.

“Huntin’s been so good, I reckon it’s about time fur the redskins to come along an’ spile it,” Tom Yager observed.

“Oh, shucks,” said Simon, lolling back on the

bed of leaves piled up behind him, "we've been round these parts fur nigh onto two year now an' never had no real trouble with the Ingens."

Nevertheless a silence fell upon the little group. The night sounds of the forest—the hoot of the owl, the footsteps of prowling animals—had not yet begun; only the dismal whine of a distant wolf wavered at intervals above the tree-tops.

In the intense quietness that quivered down after one such cry, Simon heard the snap of a twig. An animal, of course, attracted by the fire! He moved his position slightly, to peer toward the sound, and the soft whir-rr of a bullet past his ear came simultaneously with a tiny spurt of blue flame from the bushes a few feet away. As if moved by one spring, the three hunters leaped to their feet. In every mind ran the same thought: their rifles were in the lean-to, where they had put them out of the way of damp. Flight! That was their one hope of safety. So swift was their decision, so quickly did their feet respond to their thought, that almost as soon as they sprang upright they were away. The savage yell that burst from the woods, and the peppering bullets that accompanied it, swept together across the space where the men had lain, scarcely an instant after they had leaped out of range.

Slim and Tom had had years of wilderness training; Simon had youth and extraordinary

agility; the three ran close, senses straining to tell where the enemy might be. For the yell of defiance, having died down, was not repeated, and no sound of a chase was to be heard. The three hunters were necessarily noisy themselves; haste was their one object and they could not cover the sound of breaking twigs and stones flying beneath their feet. But the uncanny silence about them filled them with apprehension.

"We're in a trap," muttered Slim. "We're goin' to run straight into some o' them."

"Try hidin'," Tom advised, and they began to slacken their speed, stepping lightly and crouching low. They had been running close to the trace which they had chanced to strike, and now they branched off, half-believing that the Indians had stayed behind to plunder their camp and did not mean to follow. Deeper and darker grew the forest; the trees stood so close that it was impossible, in the gloom, to see for any distance ahead. Breathless, they paused at last.

"Wonder where the varmints hev got to?" Yager, peering in all directions, was trying desperately to see in the darkness.

A spatter of bullets answered him, coming apparently from every side. The Indians knew where they were, though they could not see them, and they had surrounded their quarry. Which way should they run? Another half dozen shots

sang through the air, clipping bark from trees. Slim gave a groan and sank to the ground. Yager and Simon were bending over him in an instant. Yager's fingers encountered a wet spot first.

"Through the brain—" the words seemed wrung from the man's lips. Simon was feeling for his heart.

"Dead o' course—never mind searchin'. We got to get away—quick." The rough fellow suddenly seized one of the dead man's hands. "Good-by, Slim," he whispered, and turning, ran at top speed.

Simon followed, and his strength being younger, soon overtook his flying comrade. Where they slipped through the enemy's lines neither knew. Only after a few minutes both realized that the pursuit was strung out behind them. The Indians, twice thwarted in their attempt to surprise the white men, now threw cunning to the winds and openly chased them, bounding through thickets, yelling like demons, sparing neither arrow nor bullet. From the noise they made it was easy to tell which direction to run now—there was but one, straight ahead. Behind them, and to the right and left, the redmen were drawing closer.

Suddenly, after a little silence, there was a fresh burst of ferocious yelling, which intimated

that the Indians were assured of speedy victory, from some circumstance which was hidden from the fugitives. A few moments later Simon and Tom knew the cause of their rejoicing. They had been running along a sort of plateau, which stretched for miles without a break. But it did not go on definitely, as the two white men discovered with sinking hearts. They found themselves, without warning, on the brink of a chasm, fully two hundred feet deep, worn perhaps by some ancient river that had ceased to exist. Granite spurs thrust themselves greedily from the yawning gulf, as if eager to drag down the unwary from the brink above. The opposite bank loomed darkly, twenty feet away. The Indians swept close on the rear, closer on the sides. Simon gasped.

"Kin you make it, Tom?"

Tom pointed an unsteady finger at the rock below.

"They're not so cruel ez the stake." Without another word, he breathed deeply once or twice, stepped back a few paces and ran with such a terrific burst of speed that Simon scarcely saw him pass. What he did see was the wiry, crouched body, hanging, what seemed to him an interminable length of time, in mid-air, above the dark depths of the chasm. Then there was the sound of shuffling, and a heavy object went

crashing down, down, while Simon almost ceased to breathe. Then:

"Foller me, son!"

Tom was safe! He had made the jump and landed on the opposite bank. The blood, that had threatened to burst Simon's heart, rushed through his veins in a warm flood. They would escape! Wild exultation lent sudden power to his tired limbs. He ran back, as Yager had done, then, in a mad rush, sped over the intervening ground to the edge of the gulf, bounded upward, lightly as though on springs, and sailed across the mighty ravine. He tottered backward as he struck the farther bank, the ground beneath him gave way as he seized a great root exposed by rains. Then he felt his wrist caught by a strong hand, and Yager was pulling him from the jaws of destruction.

There were plenty of thickets growing close to the edge of the chasm; the two men, their breath coming brokenly from great exertion, plunged into their depths. Bullets rattled harmlessly against the rocks they had cleared as they sped, hearts lightened by the certainty that their pursuers would not dare a leap so likely to end in disaster, when their prey would be already out of reach by the time even half of them could accomplish it.

After a hundred yards Simon and Tom slack-

ened their pace to the swinging gait that is frugal of breath, yet carries the traveler swiftly.

"We're ez safe from the varmints ez if they wuz t' other side o' the ocean!" said Simon, in triumph.

Yager smiled wryly.

"Not quite, Simon. But safe enough. We'll find a snug place an' rest, after a bit."

Stumbling with weariness, they were glad, a little later, to crawl into the rude shelter afforded by a group of trees, blown down and piled in a heap. A few twigs thrown beneath, experimentally, brought forth no growl nor hiss, and they thankfully curled themselves on the hard ground and slept for hours.

Tom woke next day when the morning was half over, and softly called Simon back to consciousness of a hostile world. During the night rain had begun to fall; it was now pouring steadily, monotonously. It trickled between the tree-trunks which formed their roof, and ran into pools wherever a depression invited.

"One thing—it won't git our powder wet," Tom remarked gloomily. "I only wish we hed some to get wet," responded Simon, and pulled his hunting shirt closer together at the neck.

"I reckon we kin make the Ohio," Tom mused aloud. "We know it lays to the north, and we won't hev no trouble tellin' whar that is."

72 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

"The trees'll show us that plain enough," Simon agreed, "an' once we get thar, we'll hev a chance o' meetin' some traders."

"Ef we don't lose our hair fust." Tom had never been out in the woods before without a gun, and it gave him a helpless feeling that was hard to overcome. However, nothing was to be gained by putting off the journey. The two friends rose cautiously and sighted between the tree trunks in every direction. Outside the woods were sodden, and silent save for the drip of the ceaseless rain.

"It'll hide our trace anyways," Simon whispered.

Careful to make no noise, they crept out from cover, and once more searched the surrounding wall of trees. Nothing stirred, and they ventured to step forward, peering closely at the trunks nearby. The bark would be thickest and roughest, they knew, on the north side; and where there was moss, that too would be thicker on the north, as most exposed to storms. It required careful study to pick out their course in the beginning; once sure that they were headed the right way, it was easy enough to follow the route they had mapped out for themselves. The soggy ground swallowed their footprints as soon, almost, as they were made; there was no need to go slowly in order to hide their tracks. But they

had to go silently; the night's terrors were vividly before them and they had no desire to call down another pursuit. With scarcely a word to each other, and rarely snapping a twig or rattling a stone, they fled swiftly northward. The rain pelted them mercilessly; their clothing grew damp and cold, their moccasins soon required patching. Woodsmen always carried a roll of buckskin for just such service, and a few whangs (leather thongs), for sewing new leather into place; for their soft footgear, while best for wilderness travel, soon wore through and required constant mending. But Simon and Tom, without guns, bareheaded and with none of the necessities of the ordinary wayfarer, had to suffer the added misery of worn moccasins. Gravel and dirt found their way through the holes, and their feet, already swollen with the constant wet, soon became bruised and cut. To add to their discomfort, much of the way led through great thickets that were bound together in a snarl of vines; sometimes they grew shoulder high, and the briers tore their flesh and inflicted a hundred tiny lacerations that were both painful and annoying. There was no way of catching game, and in the dripping woods, without flint and steel as they were, they had no means of making a fire. When the ache of hunger became more than they could bear they drew their long knives, which were the only

74 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

weapons they had with them, and dug into the slippery elm and the white birch to get bits of the inner bark.

They traveled far that first day, but on the next they were sore and stiff from exposure to the rain, and weak from hunger. The storm had ceased by this time, but it had been succeeded by a bleak wind that blew wildly all day long. It froze the ground and bit the wanderers to the bone.

"If we'd come across a beech tree now we might find a few nuts," Simon suggested, as they stopped for rest. They were chewing cedar bark, which was the best food they had been able to obtain that day, despite the eagerness with which they scanned the hard ground as they moved along.

"We'll starve to death afore we git to the Ohio," Tom answered, in a fit of despondency.

But toward night they had a streak of luck. In a sheltered spot Simon discovered the delicate umbrella of the Indian cucumber, and further search revealed a half dozen of the plants brave and staunch above the dry leaves. Whipping out their knives the two men dug hastily, clawing the crisp white roots from their beds with frantic fingers.

"I've a feelin' thet we're a-goin' to hev good luck from now on," declared Simon. "I reckon

we'll find all the stuff we need afore we git to the river."

When they found some toadstoods a little later Simon thought his prophecy justified, and if it had not been for the danger of Indians lurking near, he would have whooped for joy. As it was they set to plucking the inviting, firmly fleshed fungi, and they ate them all, hardly stopping to chew them. They slept that night in a warm leaf-filled cranny of a rock, more content than they had been in many hours.

"We air mighty near through the woods," Tom declared as they lay down to sleep. "I've hunted around these parts too long not to know when I'm nearin' water—it comes over me like when I'm comin' onto it."

"I shore am glad to hear that," Simon responded drowsily, "I'm achin' to git away from this woods until I kin git my hands on a gun; darn my coonskins if I ain't!"

But on the third day Tom complained of giddiness when he first rose, and a little later Simon declared his feet were "full o' cramps." After that it was only a few minutes before both men were lying on the ground, writhing in the agonies of nausea. Through half-blind eyes Simon saw that his companion's face was livid, and he wondered which of them would die first. But he was unable to give expression to his thoughts, and

forgot them as he began to shudder convulsively. Neither was conscious of the lessening of pain when the stupor that dulled it finally stole over them.

The red of dawn was streaking the sky when Simon opened his eyes and gazed stupidly around him. He had an ache in his head that threatened to crack his skull, and his limbs seemed weighted down. When he succeeded at last in forcing himself to a sitting position, he saw his friend prone and still on the ground. To his dizzy brain the sight recalled that other silent figure that he had left in the woods one April morning, now almost two years ago. To his confused mind the two figures merged into one, and he put out his hand beseechingly.

"William!" His weak voice in his own ears startled him. He brushed his hand across his forehead, smiled foolishly.

"Got 'im mixed," he muttered thickly.

The low words and the movement beside him disturbed Tom, and presently he stirred, lifting his eyelids.

"Good ol' Tom," murmured Simon. "Not dead, uh?"

Tom opened his mouth and closed it again without making any sound. The action suddenly roused his companion. His sharp ear caught the sound of falling water, and he tried to rise. But

his weak legs refused to hold him, so on hands and knees he crept forward until he came to the brook he had heard. Here, careless of whatever danger lurked near, he bent his head and drank, then plunged his face into the cold stream, again and again. The cold water revived him wonderfully, and mindful of Tom, he tore a piece from his new calico shirt and dipped it into the water. He was able to walk back, though his knees bent repeatedly beneath his weight. The dripping cloth he squeezed above Tom's dry mouth, and then he bathed his face. Fatigued by the exertion, he threw himself down once more beside his friend, and rested for a long time.

"We'll jist die like dogs unless we git along," Tom observed weakly, after a while.

"'Pears like it can't be so fur now," Simon murmured. "What do you say—will you try it?"

Assenting, Tom rose, and Simon followed his example. With set teeth, bracing themselves now and again against a tree trunk, they pushed on, half walking, half crawling over the stony ground. Again and again they dropped to the earth, asserting that they could not go on—they would rather die where they were; but the love of life was strong and forced them up and on again. They craved no food; but the relief of having no

appetite was lost in their new weakness. They covered five miles that day.

Next morning this terrific exertion had its effect. Neither could stand on his feet. They lay and wished aloud for death. But again the instinct to save themselves triumphed, and they began to crawl, no longer essaying to rise. They crept a few feet and lay down; crept and lay down, hour after hour, their hands torn and bleeding, their eyes misted over with sickness and pain. They were only a mile away from the Ohio when that fifth day began; the sun was setting when the sound of the tumbling water struck their ears. They crept forward, and found themselves on a cliff overlooking the water. Below them, the smoke of a campfire curled upward among the trees; out on the river, gilded in the long rays of the sun, danced a canoe, in which sat two white men. A sob burst from Tom's throat and he fell back in an utter collapse; Simon swayed to his feet and lifted both arms, slowly, painfully. Far out on the water the men in the canoe saw the figure outlined against the bright sky, and in that light it was magnified, so that they thought they were gazing at a giant. In the stillness it seemed to them that the cry "Help!" sounded, but they could not be sure. It might be an ambush, they reasoned; it might even be a white man in league with the Indians, and sent

out as a decoy. They pushed in to the shore and hurried to their camp, the smoke of which the two wanderers had seen. There were three other men at the camp, and a scouting party was at once organized, for if Indians were near they wanted to know it, and if the man they had seen was really in need of help they were eager to help him. Before the night had fallen Simon and Tom were feebly greeting the two Mahon brothers, from whom they had parted several months before. Food and the certainty of safety soon enabled the exhausted pair to make their way to the camp, where they were received joyfully by the rest of the hunting party, two of whom turned out to be Simon's old friends, Jacob Greathouse and William Grills.

CHAPTER VIII

WAR

“**T**HERE’LL be a fine liftin’ of topknots before this is over.”

“Huh! War was bound to come. Horses stolen right and left—folks murdered in their cabins without warning. The back country couldn’t stand it, and the men are mighty glad to get the chance to fight it out with the red skunks.”

George Rogers Clark, a young Virginian, answered Simon with unquailing blue eyes, as he stared at the preparations for war with which Fort Pitt was seething. Simon had come up the Ohio at the first rumor of excitement. He had been hunting alone in the forest, ever since he and Yager had been rescued at the mouth of the Great Kanawha River, occasionally falling in with hunting or trading parties that constantly traversed the deep wilderness. It was now the summer of 1774; the previous spring had seen the trouble between the borderers and the redmen reach the boiling point, and Governor Dunmore of Virginia had descended upon Fort Pitt with his levies, fifteen hundred strong. Simon and

George Clark had been accepted as scouts, a form of service which both young men, delighting in the wild life of the forest, found wholly acceptable.

"The Ingens are out for blood. Big Chief Logan has sworn to take ten scalps for one," George went on.

"He's blazin' about losin' all his kin at Yeller Creek," remarked Simon. "Didn't I hear tell thet you-all were thar at that time?"

"I was round there," admitted George, "but I wasn't in on the massacre of Logan's people. I know how the whole thing happened though. Dr. Connolly, here at the fort, who is a sort of lieutenant for Governor Dunmore, sent out a letter last April telling the borderers to be ready to withstand an attack by the Ingens. That was after three traders were attacked, and one killed, right near here."

"The same thing happened to me," remarked Simon. "Only last year the Ingens got after three of us on the Kanaway—an' pore ole Slim wuz killed."

"Plenty of cases like that," agreed George. "Well, Captain Cresap hasn't any use for a red-man, you know that, and he was at Wheeling when this letter went around. I was with him—he had a sizable band of hunters along, and we all declared war in regular style, let me tell you."

82 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

"I heard o' that," said Simon, "set up a war-pole, didn't you, and hed a war-dance an' all?"

George's eyes gleamed at the recollection.

"You can bet your coonskins we did! Painted the pole half red, and danced around it, whooping and howling and sticking our axes in just as if we were red instead of white!"

"An' then did you git after the redskins?" inquired Simon.

"Captain Cresap went out and got a couple of Shawnees. Some folks didn't like it, said they were friendlies. I don't hold with any talk of friendly Ingens."

"An' I don't."

"Captain Cresap went out the next day and I was with him then. We came across some Shawnees that had been trading round here. Plugged one of them good and wounded two others."

"But Cresap warn't responsible fur killin' Logan's kin?"

"No," said George. "He had it in mind though, sure enough. There was a camp of them at Yellow Creek, about fifty miles from where we were then. We started off and got quite a ways along the trail, when our blood began to cool down a little. You see, these people of Logan's were known to be friendly, and even though I don't hold with friendly Ingens, there's got to be exceptions made. Everybody knows

that Logan himself is a white sort of Ingen. Leastways, he was before this happened. So we turned around and went home, instead of doing any more killing. But Daniel Greathouse was different—he's a low-down chap. Sells rum to the Ingens. That's how he got hold of the Logan crowd. They came to get the drink, and he and his men butchered them then and there."

"Not much sport to thet," Simon agreed.

"Not many thinks there was. Logan himself has been out on the rampage ever since. Only a few days ago he murdered a family and left a note tied to a war-club at the cabin. Hear about it?"

"No," replied Simon, who had not been many days in the fort.

"He got a white prisoner to write it for him. 'What did you kill my people on Yellow Creek for?' it said. He's out to make all the whites sorry they ever did him a wrong. It's Cresap he's wild after, though. Blames him for the Yellow Creek business."

"I reckon I know how he feels," remarked Simon. "But we-all hev to protect the back country, jist the same. They'll never be peace while thar's a redskin left, an' we-all might as well be about killin' 'em now ez any other time."

"I pity the traders who are among the

84 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

Shawnees just now," said George. "There's no telling whether they're alive or dead."

There was a commotion outside the cabin where the two were resting after a day's scouting around the fort. They found the tall Delaware chief, White Eyes, in the middle of a crowd of excited borderers.

"He's been down the river," they told the newcomers. "Says the Shawnees are out for war, all right. There's forty-odd headed to strike somewhere in Virginia."

"Are the Delawares going to join them?" George asked.

White Eyes heard the question.

"Me friendly," he said, in the sing-song manner of the Indian. "My braves not go on war-path."

"Huh! Don't take much stock in what any Ingen says," muttered a man at Simon's elbow.

"I reckon the Delawares will stay out of it," said another. Simon recognized his old friend, Simon Girty. They clasped hands and withdrew from the crowd. Girty, it seemed, was also a scout in the army Dunmore was raising. Thereafter he and Simon Kenton looked for Indian signs together, when circumstances permitted.

Day by day the army grew. Canoes were built, keel-boats and dug-outs made ready by the "Long Knives," as the border men were known

to the Indians. These heroes of the frontier gathered from distant camp and tiny fortified village, armed with rifle and tomahawk and carrying flint-lock, shot-bag and powder-horn. They wore the hunting shirt and leggings of ordinary life—the home-dyed garments of yellow, brown, green and red, all blending extraordinarily well with the forest background. As they waited, settlers from the back country constantly streamed in, to the great annoyance of Governor Dunmore. He constantly urged them not to abandon their farms, but to stay and harvest their supplies.

“Not half the people could raise five charges of powder in case of a big Indian invasion,” he was told. “They dare not stay.” Many of the men who fled down the country declared that they were taking their wives and children to places of safety, and meant to return to their cabins.

The Virginians, as a whole, were for war. Especially those settlers in the Ohio basin who claimed to be Virginians were eager for fight. Their lives and their property were at stake; moreover, the Shawnees had plenty of horses, and there was expectation of much plunder when the Indian towns should be taken. Motives were mixed, but determination ran high. The “Long Knives” meant to make the border safe. Pennsylvanians, on the other hand, wanted no Indian war. They made their living by trading with the

86 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

redmen; to drive them further west would make trade more difficult—ruin it, in many cases.

While Governor Dunmore prepared to descend the Ohio River, a second wing of the army which he was gathering was entrusted to General Andrew Lewis. This section, also fifteen hundred strong, was gathering at the Greenbrier River Valley. The two wings were to join at the mouth of the Great Kanawha, but at the last moment Governor Dunmore changed his plans, deciding to march to the Scioto, himself, instead of to the Kanawha.

Simon Kenton, Simon Girty, George Rogers Clark and the other scouts received definite orders when the army was ready to move. Cunning in woodlore as the Indians themselves, these men were to keep the army covered from all sides, front, rear, right and left, never getting closer than within a mile of the rank and file. "Look out for Indian signs," ran the text of their orders. "Discover the number of Indians in the vicinity if there are any signs; find out the route they are taking, their intentions, if possible, and give a speedy warning of an attack, if such is contemplated."

Summer was waning when the Governor's troops moved from Fort Pitt. Tales of the Indians' furious inroads on the back country filled the ears of every settler; cabin burnings were

daily occurrences; under cover of the dark the bloodthirsty savages stole out of the woods, slaying, torturing with all the cruelty they could devise. Cornstalk, the Shawnee chief, was the leader of all the Indians in this bitter border warfare. He was a mighty warrior, savage, relentlessly cruel; he was not above pretending friendliness with the whites in order to catch them off their guard, and, feeling instinctively that his race was waging a losing battle, he urged on his braves to fierce combat.

It was against this furious foe that the frontiersmen marched in September, when the great oak woodlands were beginning to flame in a setting of somber pines and hemlocks. Governor Dunmore, with seven hundred of his followers, loaded into a hundred canoes, and as many more clumsier boats, came down the Ohio River from Fort Pitt, renamed Fort Dunmore, and paused to build a stockade at the mouth of the Hocking. Traveling by land, with horses and bullocks, came five hundred more men, bearing flour and other necessities for the campaign. From the south, the second wing, under General Lewis, moved northward from the Greenbriar Valley at the same time. The route lay through a trackless forest. Baggage, provisions and ammunition were carried by pack horses, scaling tremendous slopes, winding through deep ravines

88 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

and steadily descending from the heights of the Alleghanies to the valley of the Ohio.

While the white men marched, the cunning red-skin darted ahead of them in the forest, showing himself suddenly in a lonely clearing to scalp and burn those who had been too brave to flee, and disappeared again into the wilderness, with nothing to tell which way he had gone.

CHAPTER IX

THE FOREST RUNNERS

“**M**AKES you feel mighty ticklish!” Simon Kenton, Simon Girty and another scout named McCulloch, were staring down at a sight which was not new to them, but never seemed less terrible because of repetition. At a spot in the trail where the road led off to a settler’s clearing, lay the dead bodies of eight whites—a man and a woman, and six children. They had all been scalped.

“Who do you reckon they air?” asked Simon Girty.

“The Spears, most likely,” returned Simon Kenton. “These folks hev been dead a good while—an’ I remember hearin’ one o’ the families thet come flyin’ down the country tell about a Benjamin Spear an’ his folks bein’ scalped out this-a-way.”

“Let’s bury ’em,” suggested McCulloch, and the three set to work to perform this last kind office. When it was done, they proceeded to the site of the cabin, which they found partially burned. Rain perhaps had washed out the flames before they had finished the destruction

90 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

of this white man's defiance to the wilderness.

"I reckon they were chased out o' the cabin by the fire, an' the redskins pretended to take 'em captive, afore they scalped 'em, just to torture 'em a little longer," remarked Kenton.

"We'll pay 'em out fur thet!" cried McCulloch, fiercely. Girty was silent.

"What's the matter, don't you jist ache fur a whack at the sneakin' Ingens?" demanded Kenton.

"I'll fight all right, when the time comes," replied the other. "But I can't help thinkin' thet the redskins hev a good deal to put up with too—losin' their homes and bein' druv back further and further from their old huntin'-grounds."

Kenton, who had heard similar sentiments expressed recently and frequently by Girty, eyed his companion sharply, but said nothing. He did not like the thought that was forming in his own mind in regard to this friend, and he refused to put it into words. But he could not help remembering that Simon Girty had lived for years with the Indians.

The three scouts were bearing a dispatch between the two great wings of the white army. Governor Dunmore, now entrenched on the Scioto River, on the edge of the Pickaway Plains, near the Indian town of Chillicothe, was engaged in sending detachments against hostile

Indian towns along the Ohio. Day by day his troops crept cautiously from behind the breast-works of fallen timber which he had erected and descended upon the towns whose warriors had been drawn off, by Cornstalk, into some hidden fastness of the forest, where they were planning a mighty attack on the white forces. Indian women and papooses were captured, and sometimes supplies of corn, and a few horses.

Meanwhile Lewis' troops, making their road as they went, with ax-men in advance, had reached the Great Kanawha River, and following it down to the Ohio, had built their camp at Point Pleasant, a cape of land jutting out between the Ohio and the Kanawha. It was the sixth of October when they reached this spot. At the very time when they were preparing strong fortifications, the three scouts, pushing their way through the woods, were carrying a message from Governor Dunmore which ordered Lewis to break camp and join him on the Pickaway Plains, where the chances of victory, in case of a big Indian attack, were infinitely better.

But Kenton, Girty and McCulloch were not the only scouts abroad in the forest. Fleet-footed Indian runners had trailed the southern division of the whites; had watched it, from the peaks of the Alleghanies, weaving its way northward. They had sped through the wilderness by hidden

92 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

routes that only the redmen knew, and clinging to the cliffs above the Kanawha, had seen the white host pause at its mouth. As the white scouts pressed forward with Governor Dunmore's dispatch to General Lewis, the red runners passed them, miles apart, on their way to the council-house of the great Cornstalk, in Chillicothe on the Pickaway Plains. Before Kenton and his companions had reached their destination, Cornstalk, listening to the story of his messengers, had resolved that the two wings of the border army would never meet. He would destroy the division at the mouth of the Kanawha, swing back to the Hockhocking, and from there fall upon the division under Dunmore. Cornstalk was an able chief—he planned well, and in the forest gathered a thousand warriors, hideous with paint, mad to kill.

They began a swift approach to the Ohio. With silent tread they slipped through the dim wilderness—Shawnees for the most part, with a scattering of Mingos, Wyandots, Ottawas, and some stray Delawares.

Late in the evening of October ninth, only three days after the white army had reached its resting place on the Kanawha, the redmen came to a halt on the bank of the Ohio, at a point about three miles away. They were carrying rafts—seventy-nine of them—clumsy craft for crossing

the Ohio. But Cornstalk's will was strong. Long before daylight the whole thousand warriors had been ferried across the wide stream, and begun the march through the bottom lands on the east bank. Here the forest was dense; boughs of towering trees interlaced, and the foliage had not yet fallen. Though it was a starlit night, the forest aisles were black. Nevertheless, the war band pressed on; the way was strewn with fallen timber and matted vines; briars grew thick; thickets of spicewood were entwined with tall weeds—yet the tireless redmen never paused. All through the night they drew nearer, nearer, to the sleeping Virginians at Point Pleasant. Sleeping, indeed they were. Little attention was paid to army regulations by the sturdy borderers who made up General Lewis' division. Like their enemies, the Indians, they relied principally on the reports of their scouts, and the natural watchfulness of each individual member of the army. At sundown that night the scouts had come in with assurances that there was not an Indian within fifteen miles; the sentinels as well as the main body of troops, were tired from the long march recently completed, and dozed at their posts as the night waned.

All this while Simon Kenton and his two companions had been nearing the place where the

second great wing, they knew, would be found. They had been traveling by night, fearing an attack by the Indians during the day. While the Indians were crossing the Ohio, they, too, at a point nearer the mouth of the Kanawha, had been doing the same thing, on a raft hastily constructed of fallen timber. They were within a mile of General Lewis' division—were, indeed, able to see the glow and trailing smoke of dying camp fires—at that hour, just before the dawn, which is darkest. They were tired, and had begun to abandon caution. Suddenly, from behind them, came the sound of running feet and crashing thickets. They leaped to cover behind trees, but they had been seen.

"Indians!" shouted a man, knowing that his voice would be his safeguard against attack.

"To camp! To camp! They're coming!" and he ran past without pausing for breath. The three scouts swung in behind him.

"Where are they? How many?" they cried together as they caught up.

"Right behind us—got my pal. We were after deer—hadn't got a mile from camp," answered the alarmist, in gasps.

"Ran right into 'em—don't talk. Run!" And the four men ran as they had never run in all their danger-ridden lives, straight for the sleeping encampment.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTLE AT POINT PLEASANT

“**I**NDIANS—five acres o’ them, thick as they can stand!” shouted the young frontiersmen, rushing through the camp on the way to the general’s tent. Instantly the drums beat to arms, and the backwoodsmen, lying under the open sky, tossed aside blankets and began to examine flints and priming. They crowded around the messengers of ill tidings demanding more information.

“Stand back, stand back!” cried the first man to give the alarm. “There’s not a moment—the general!”

At the door of his tent, roused by the tumult, General Lewis met the breathless runners. He took the news without a word, but calmly lit his pipe, pocketed the dispatch which Simon Kenton handed him, and without reading it, sent for his brother, Charles Lewis, who was in charge of a division, and Colonel Fleming.

“Lead on your companies to a skirmish,” he told them. “Doubtless the men’s excitement ran away with them—I expect you’ll have only a scouting party to deal with.”

96 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

Simon Kenton, who was "itchin' fur a shootin' match," as he said to himself, looked to his own gun and fell in with the two companies that marched out, only a few minutes after the first alarm had been given. The defense moved in two columns, one headed by Colonel Lewis, on the right, and the other, on the left, by Colonel Fleming. Briskly, and about a hundred and fifty yards apart, they marched up the Ohio River.

The sun was not yet up—the outline of trees and bushes showed dimly through the lingering night shadow. Ahead of the backwoodsmen ran two scouts, eagerly peering right and left. They had gone a half a mile when an Indian's topknot bobbed suddenly above a thicket—a brown leg flashed against a tree trunk. Both scouts fired—someone else banged away at the same moment. Then the answer came—hundreds of rifles ringing out together. Simon Kenton, who was with the right column under Lewis, did what the others were doing—breaking rank and taking to trees, to fight the Indian in his own fashion. A bullet whizzed past Simon's head as he ducked to cover, and leaning out to take careful aim in return he saw the figure of the gallant colonel, who had disdained a tree, and was standing in an open space.

"Courage, men!" he was calling. "Aim before you shoot!" A bullet put a period to his

words. The echo of his voice had not died away when Simon saw him sway, pull himself together, give a few more orders in a firm voice, then, handing his gun to a man nearby, walk slowly, unassisted, toward the camp.

Meanwhile, General Lewis, hearing the tremendous fire, awakened to the great danger of his men, dispatched two hundred more, under Colonel Field, to the scene of the conflict, at the same time starting to fortify the camp with a breastwork of timber. This fortification, running from the Ohio River across the point to the Kanawha, would serve to protect the camp on the one side from which danger could approach.

Colonel Field and his detachment came rushing to the aid of the whites, just as their lines were wavering under the terrific fire of the Indians. Close behind came constant fresh reënforcements from the camp—and they were all needed. The enemy forces were nearly equal in numbers, and while the whites had the greater skill in the use of the rifle, the redmen were their superiors when it came to keeping out of harm's way.

The noise of the battle was deafening. Above the constant roar of the guns came the howling of the savages, their yelling and whooping mingled with the taunts they shouted in broken English: "White man no make singing—uh?" referring to the silence of the drums and fifes,

for the fighting was too close for any such spurs.

Simon Kenton, firing and loading, firing and loading, with calm rapidity, was near to Colonel Fleming, who was shouting commands in a loud voice. He saw two balls pass through the Colonel's left arm, and started forward to help him. Colonel Fleming waved him back and called in a voice that could be heard above the uproar: "Don't lose an inch of ground; advance, outflank the enemy; keep between them and the river!" But he had given his last command; a third ball struck him in the breast and he stepped slowly back. Simon was among those who pressed forward to carry him from the field. "Don't mind me," he murmured, "go up and fight." A piece of his lung was protruding from his chest; he raised his hand, pressing it back, as the men carried him away.

"They sure air gittin' our officers," remarked Simon to one of the men who had helped him bring the Colonel to his tent, as they crept back to the scene of fighting.

"They'll git plenty o' the rest of us afore they're done."

By this time, Colonel Field, taking command of the troops, had begun to push back the Indians. He was not destined to see the result of his efforts, however, for as he stood behind a tree, trying to get a shot at an Indian on his left hand,

who was purposely distracting him with loud jeers, two other Indians, hidden among some logs on his right, shot him dead. Captain Evan Shelby, who saw him fall, rushed to take command, and the frontiersmen fought on regardless of their constantly changing leaders.

The fighting was spread over a distance of a mile and a quarter—that is, the hostile lines were stretched out to that length—but the foes were very close, never more than twenty yards apart, and nearly all the fighting was among individuals. Many white men grappled hand to hand with the Indians, knives and tomahawks were freely used, and rifles clubbed when the combatants were too close for shooting.

Simon Kenton, darting from tree to tree with fresh vigor after the respite of carrying the wounded colonel to safety, caught sight of a brown figure almost hidden behind a slim sapling. He raised his gun and with one movement slipped around his own tree and sent a bullet into the Indian before he could move. An instinct for danger made him wheel sharply on the instant, just in time to dodge the blow of another redman who had poised his tomahawk just above Simon's head. With his rifle he knocked the ax from the hand of the savage and they closed in, fighting with their bare hands.

"You hev'n't got my hair yet!" Simon's snarl

100 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

was involuntary—born of rage at the discovery that his end had been so near. The Indian was silent, using all his strength in a duel to the death. Simon was the larger man and more powerful, but the Indian made up in agility whatever he lacked in size. He was nearly naked, too, and his body was covered with oil, rendering a hold impossible. Repeatedly Simon tried for a grip that would enable him to lift the savage from his feet; every time the Indian squirmed from beneath his iron fingers. The redman twisted and turned constantly and Simon, growing a little breathless at last, began to see the trick the other meant to play. The wily savage meant to tire his adversary and then, when opportunity offered, deliver a telling blow. As he realized this, Simon bent almost double, and never relinquishing the sliding grip he had on his enemy's body, seized the head of his tomahawk, upright in his belt, between his strong, gleaming teeth! Before the Indian could fathom his plan, the white man, without raising himself from his bent position, shifted his right hand lower and lower, seized the handle of his ax suddenly, and fiercely struck his foe's knee! With the swiftness of an animal, Simon sprang away as the Indian, his leg almost severed, tottered for a second, then fell. Almost at the same instant Simon whirled his ax again,

and it crashed through the redman's skull. He gasped and lay still.

Straightening himself and breathing heavily for a few minutes, Simon stood behind a tree, reloading his gun. Bullets pattered against leaves like rain, and in a sudden lull in the almost constant yelling, a deep, guttural voice rumbled out over the fighters.

"Be strong! Be strong! Lie close! Shoot well!" it said.

"Cornstalk!" muttered Simon. Shrieks of rage, groans of agony, yells of defiance, drowned out the voice of the able Indian chief, but again and again, whenever there was a lull in the uproar, Simon could hear the booming: "Be strong! Shoot well!"

The sun had long since risen; it rose higher and higher as the fighting went on, yet neither side seemed to gain an advantage. White men fell, and red; rifles rang constantly, men fought in each others' arms until one or both died; they clubbed and stabbed and strangled each other, but still every tree seemed to shelter a bronze figure, and every redman seemed to be faced with a white adversary.

At noon a party of Indians made a desperate attempt to outflank the whites, trying to get to the point where the camp lay, and hem in their foes from front and rear. They were discovered

and in the fierce onslaught of the whites that followed they were forced back, step by step, for nearly a mile, by the brisk fire of the rifles. One o'clock found them, in their retreat, in a long slash near the river, where steep banks and heavy underbrush made a further advance on the part of the whites very dangerous; here the action halted until nearly sundown, the two lines firing repeatedly, though with little effect. At times the undaunted redmen still called out to their foes, shouting that they had as many men as the whites, and that they would be two thousand strong on the morrow.

Sundown came, and the issue was still undecided. General Lewis knew that if darkness settled on the field of battle it might soon cover a general massacre, or at best, that the fight would be resumed, with doubtful results, the next day. He decided on a strong move. Three of the best companies were recalled from the front to the point where the Kanawha met the Ohio; there they slipped down beneath the bank of the Kanawha and among the high weeds crept steadily toward the Indian line for three quarters of a mile. At this point they came to the mouth of a little creek, known as Crooked Creek, and this they followed until they reached a high bluff. Ascending the bank, they poured out a fresh fire on the Indian rear. It was just dusk; the In-

dians, believing that new reënforcements had come from Governor Dunmore, fled, leaving nearly all of their dead, contrary to custom, behind them. Under cover of the darkness they melted into the forest, the way they had come that morning, through the tangled bottom-lands to their boats on the bank of the Ohio, and, carrying their wounded with them, made their escape across the river.

CHAPTER XI

SIMON MAKES A DISCOVERY

“**T**HE Ingens are mighty quiet since the peace—I wonder how long they’ll leave us be?”

“Ef they keep to their own side o’ the Ohio, as they’re bound to do by the peace, they’ll be so many new white settlements that they won’t dare come round any more.”

“Thet’s so, Tom, the woods is getting pretty full o’ white families,” returned Simon Kenton, who with Thomas Williams, a young man of his own age, was hunting along the Kain-tuck-ee side of the Ohio River, in the early spring of the year 1775. Peace had been concluded between the whites and the Indians shortly after the battle of Point Pleasant, and the Indians were glad enough to agree to the terms—that no Indian should visit or hunt on the south side of the Ohio. Trading with the whites was permitted. In return for their assurance that the whites would be free to settle on the southern side of the great river, Governor Dunmore promised Cornstalk that no whites would hunt, or molest the Indians, on the north side of the Ohio. The border war

SIMON MAKES A DISCOVERY 105

having been concluded with such satisfactory terms, the rugged border soldiers had disbanded, and Simon Kenton, among the others, had received his pay and discharge at Fort Pitt.

"But that ain't sayin' I'm a-goin' to be caught nappin', with tow in my ears, by any sneakin' Ingen," added Simon, continuing his lazy conversation with his companion, as their little dug-out floated smoothly down the broad river. They had been paddling for hours; the sun was dipping low in the flaming sky, and on the western bank the shadows were already dense.

"Hullo, here's a crick," remarked Simon, after a long silence broken only by the splash of the paddle and the lonely twittering of belated birds as they made their way homewards. The creek which Simon's sharp eyes had discerned in the gathering gloom was one of many such small streams that empty into the Ohio. They formed ideal landing places in the high, wooded shores that stretched unbroken for a thousand miles, hemming in the mighty waters of the river.

Tom, his eyesight less keen than his companion's, paddled on for a little distance before he too was able to make out the welcome sight of the small, gurgling creek, inviting them to make themselves a comfortable night's camp.

"It beats all how you kin see so fur, Simon

106 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

Butler," he chuckled, heading the dug-out into the shallower stream.

"It's lucky one of us has got his eyesight," retorted Simon, as they pushed beneath a tangle of overhanging boughs and dry brushwood. Here they leaped ashore, hid the canoe, and carrying with them a small part of their scanty store of corn bread and dressed deer meat, made their way to a dry and sheltered spot. Soon they had a fire kindled, and their steaks were broiling at the end of long, pointed sticks.

"Lucky we met that Frenchman," remarked Tom, when his good supper had made him talkative.

"We made a good bargain," agreed Simon. Only a few days before they had encountered a French trader, who had gladly received the supply of furs which they had gathered during the winter, giving them in return ammunition, parched corn, salt, coffee and potatoes. It was due to this fortunate chance that they had not been forced to return to the settlements to exchange their furs, and could now continue down the Ohio, exploring unknown country.

The next morning found Simon eager for a taste of turkey, as he said himself, and leaving Tom to guard their property, he wandered off into the forest. It was a fine spring morning with the tang of winter still hanging in the air.

The trees were not yet clothed in their full glory of green, but were misted with promise. Mighty trees they were, too, larger than any Simon had yet seen. He stood gazing at one specimen, towering a hundred and fifty feet into the air, and easily twelve feet in girth.

"Bust my buckskins!" said Simon, his leather-brown face beaming with admiration as he measured with his eye the majestic proportions of this forest giant, "that air a tree, an' no mistake. I reckon it's been growin' fur nigh onto a hundred years—no, a thousand."

He stood still so long that a bird nearby, whose song had turned shrill at his approach, took heart once more and sang with the full-throated unconcern of the feathered songster who knows no danger is near.

"Sing, young feller," Simon admonished him heartily, "sing, you-all hev got plenty to sing about."

The slim, frightened youth who had fled through the woods four years before, at almost the same time of year, was nearly unrecognizable in the tall, powerful figure that to-day strode through a totally unknown wilderness with an air of belonging to the wild scene. Simon's back had broadened, his sinews had hardened, his senses had become so sharpened that he was a match for any red warrior. His skin had been burned

108 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

by hot suns and bitten by frosty nights in the open until it had taken on a permanent bronze hue, very striking against the icy blue of his eyes, and the pale yellow of his hair, bleached by the sun until it was almost flaxen.

Thrilling with sheer delight at the majesty of the country around him, Simon moved boldly onward, his sharp eyes noting the signs that would lead him back when the time came, his hands occasionally busy with a slight blazing of tree trunk or piling of stone. It was not long before he came across a fine buck, and the animal dropped before the spang of Simon's first bullet had died away on the air. He picked the creature up and hung it upon the limb of a tree where it could not be reached by wolves. The fresh tracks of a herd of elk next drew him on, and before he really wanted another shot, he found himself gazing into the startled but not frightened eyes of the two young does. They seemed to look at the intruder with wonder rather than fear, but Simon was a hunter. He lifted his gun to his shoulder and one delicate creature sank to the ground with a ball between the eyes. The other did not run; instead, she stood looking upon her fallen companion very much as a human being might do; to Simon, conqueror of the forest, she offered another shot, and he dispatched her without misgiving or hesitation.

SIMON MAKES A DISCOVERY 109

Then, on after the elks! The trail led swiftly on through miles of woodland. Simon noted the absence of underbrush and the tendency of the trees to form great groves. Occasionally there were stretches of grass where no trees grew—beautiful open spaces that seemed designed by nature for the home of man. Presently the hunter came across that which made him abandon the elk trail—it was a buffalo trace, wide as a wagon-road, deeply sunk into the earth. Happily he followed it; a mile slipped quickly beneath his feet—two miles. He had topped a gentle rise and suddenly before him spread out a wide valley, covered, as far as the eye could reach, with dry, brown stalks, shoulder-high—token of last year's luxuriance, slowly giving way to the new crop of shoots that sprang thick and close at every root.

"The cane-land!" cried Simon, his eyes alight. "By the eternal coonskin! Old Yager was right—it's a sight fur sore eyes."

He wound his way down the hillside to the bottom-land, noting the rank growth of grass, and prodding the earth with the toe of his moccasins to see the quality of the ground. It was the richest earth he had ever seen, and his heart beat rapidly as he stood among the waving cane, taking in the signs which told that here was a hunter's paradise, as well as ground worthy of

110 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

tilling. Buffalo paths and trails of elk and deer led and crossed in every direction, making it plain that the country abounded in game. Simon returned to the canoe and told Tom Williams of his find.

"Lucky thing we got these things from the Frenchman," said Tom. "We'll hev no trouble gettin' settled in our new home."

"Do you reckon anyone has ever been here afore?" wondered Simon.

"I reckon not," returned Tom, emphatically. "Ef anyone had ever so much as laid eyes on a place like you say is out yonder, the hull country'd be overrun with settlers by now."

Secure in their belief that they were the first white men to discover the cane-land, the two proceeded to sink their canoe, and with all their worldly possessions on their backs, made their way to the very spot that Simon had first found only a few hours before. They ran up a rough lean-to, with fresh-cut young trees for poles and skins for covering.

"We'll put it right near this spring, and then we won't hev to fetch water at all—just help ourselves whenever we're thirsty," Tom suggested.

"Might ez well hev every advantage," Simon agreed. "How much corn do you think we ought to plant?"

"Plant a good-sized patch while we're about it,"

SIMON MAKES A DISCOVERY 111

said Tom. "I never seed too much corn a-growin' yet."

They had no hoes, but their tomahawks served nicely for clearing a small patch of the soft earth, and they planted every kernel of precious corn that they dared spare from their slender stock. Full of the enjoyment of nature at her best, the two woodsmen watched their corn-patch sprout and grow, swiftly and hardily, under the gentle rains and increasingly warm sun; their rifles provided them with game, and nearby streams offered them fish for the taking. Summer passed in a haze of content; the corn ripened, and after a day's exploring the two sat beside their warm fire, roasting the fine, juicy ears that would add a final touch to their supper of venison or buffalo meat.

One day in late summer Simon wandered far afield, ten or twelve miles toward the south, where he was astonished to come across several large buffalo roads. Curious, he followed one of them, noting as he went the worn trails which marked the constant passage of many kinds of game. The going was easy, for there was no underbrush, and the turf was smooth and velvety. Presently the buffalo trace widened until it was lost among the other trails that seemed to indicate that great herds of animals had for years been going to some important council-place, and

112 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

Simon's wonder grew. And then, before his gaze stretched a full ten acres of valley, bare of grass or tree, dotted over with buffalo and elk, all industriously licking the earth.

"A salt-lick!" cried Simon, so loudly that the creatures nearby, startled, looked up and began a stampede. Just in time the hunter recovered himself and sent a ball into the heart of a young buffalo. The opportunity for a good shot having been duly taken advantage of, he turned his attention to the examination of the region. He found a big salt spring a couple of hundred yards away from a small river, and saw that the water was a peculiar blue color.

"Blue Lick'd be a fine name fur this place," said Simon, who, like all the explorers of his time was fond of naming every new spot to which he took a fancy.

Stooping, he tasted the water, and found it very salt.

"Wal, Tom and I'll know where to come when we run shy o' salt," he thought, happily. "It does beat all how the wilderness provides fur a man thet is willin' to trust himself—an' his gun," he added, as an afterthought. The ground, he discovered, all about the spring, and several smaller ones which he found scattered about, was depressed three or four inches below the surface of the surrounding country, bearing testimony

SIMON MAKES A DISCOVERY 113

to the usage of the salt lick by generations of hard-hoofed animals.

The day was waning when Simon's minute examination of the spot was complete, so preparing to spend the night on the shore of the quiet river, he cut a steak from his tender young buffalo and holding it over the fine bed of coals that he soon had ready, he gave himself up to a pleasing train of reflection.

"No reason why we can't stay here furever," he thought. "All the food we want—all the salt, even. Not an Ingen in sight—nor likely to be, now thet we-all fixed 'em up back thar on the Ohio."

In this contented frame of mind he stretched himself out on a bed of leaves, and slept with the freedom of one who knows himself safe from attack. The next morning he crept softly toward the salt spring, hoping to be unnoticed by any animals that might be there. He wanted to see them in their full numbers, so that he might tell Tom and watch his eyes grow big with unbelief.

But it was Simon's eyes that first grew big, for beside the spring stood two white men!

CHAPTER XII

FRIENDS—MADE AND LOST

WITH the swiftness of a wild creature, Simon leaped to cover behind a gum tree, to take a careful survey of the two strangers before allowing them to see him. Plenty of white men had gone over to the Indians, he knew, and peace or no peace, he was not the man to be easily led into an ambush. With his finger on the hammer of his rifle, he searched the surrounding country for signs of a hidden band of warriors. He noted the flickering of young leaves in the wind, the bending of boughs here and there; he listened sharply to the note of birds, waiting for the change in their song that would denote fear, and therefore the presence of an enemy. But the boughs bent only as wind-moved objects stir, and the birds sang on, undisturbed.

Satisfied that the two white men were alone, Simon next gave attention to their appearance. It was reassuring; both men bore signs of great weariness; their moccasins were worn through; their hands empty. They carried neither rifle nor knife, nor any weapon that Simon, the sharp-

eyed, could see, and sure that these were no enemies, he approached softly.

"Mornin', strangers," he said, when, with the swift noiselessness of a panther, he stepped up beside them without giving them any warning whatever.

The two men wheeled, their faces lit by indescribable joy. They stretched out their arms, and all their weakness was apparent in the trembling that suddenly shook them from head to foot.

"Food!" said the taller, through stiff lips. The other seized Simon by the arm.

"We haven't seen anyone in weeks," he cried. "We're starving!"

"Come," said Simon, turning toward the site of his camp of the night before. Without waiting, he hurried on ahead, and soon had his fire rekindled. Several strips of buffalo meat were ready for broiling by the time the two strangers came up with him again, and as soon as the food, held over the fire, began to give out a tantalizing aroma, the taller man snatched a piece from the coals and began to eat.

"Easy thar," said Simon, "this'll taste a whole lot better fur a few minutes' cookin'."

The other man waited, but the tall fellow refused to relinquish the meat he held firmly clutched, and Simon, understanding the terrible

hunger that assailed him, said no more and hastened the broiling as much as possible. When the meat was sufficiently done, he divided it between his two guests and brought them water to drink. The relief at being rescued from the cruel fate of starvation, and the warmth and energy created by the food, very quickly restored the two haggard creatures to the semblance of real men. They were ready to relate their tale of woe to the first human ear they had found in weeks.

"Hendricks is my name," said the shorter fellow, who was sturdily built. "We were bound for the falls of the Ohio—coming from Fort Pitt."

"And hunting on the way," put in the other. "My name's Fitzpatrick. We left last fall, and sorry I am that I ever undertook the trip. These woods—!" He made a wry face, indicative of extreme disgust with the surrounding wilderness.

"We got along fine all winter," Hendricks reminded his companion.

The other shrugged.

"If you want to call it fine to have nothing to eat but fat bear's meat, nowhere to sleep but the bare ground——"

"Now, now," said Simon, placatingly, "why didn't you-all bring a blanket?"

"We had blankets and ammunition in plenty," declared Hendricks. "Fitz here exaggerates considerable. Fact is, he's plumb sick of the woods and doesn't care what he says about them."

"Well, those that enjoy a ducking in an icy river and a stroll of forty miles through a howling wilderness in place of supper are welcome to 'em, that's all I have to say," returned Fitzpatrick.

"We got along swimmingly," continued Hendricks, "for months. And then one day a squall came and upset our canoe, and the swimming began in earnest, let me tell you!"

"We lost everything we had," said Fitzpatrick, plaintively.

Hendricks confirmed this with a nod.

"Everything but the clothes on our backs. We haven't been able to make a fire, and we hadn't a bite to eat till just now, except for bark and some roots we found."

Simon was full of sympathy, remembering his own similar experiences with the wilderness.

"The woods is sure unfriendly to the man without a gun," he admitted. "But give me a good rifle, a little powder and lead, and thar's no settlement could tempt me out of 'em. I got as fine a home ez you'd find anywhar," he added, his eyes lighting up with pride. "It's jest ez an old pal o' mine used to say—the greatest place this

side o' sundown!' The richest ground—all the buffalo an' deer you want, an' no other folks eround, rubbin' elbows an' makin' all kinds o' trouble."

"I'm fond of the woods myself, even if Fitz here is done with 'em," said Hendricks.

"Maybe you-all would like to hang eround my place a bit. Old Tom'll be glad enough to see a couple o' white faces."

"Let's have a look first," suggested Hendricks.

So, as soon as the two strangers were able to travel, they all set off through the woods to the tiny cleared patch that Simon called home. Tom Williams was delighted at the arrival of company, and prepared a big potpie, with fresh-killed turkey as the principal ingredient. Hendricks was greatly impressed with the comfort of the little lone dwelling in the wilderness, and when Tom seconded Simon's invitation to the men to stay a while, readily agreed. But Fitzpatrick stubbornly refused to consider remaining away from civilization. Seeing that he was determined to go, the others ceased to press him to remain.

"We-all hev got an extry gun," said Simon, "an' we kin let you hev it, since you're bent on goin'. We'll see you to the point, an' from thar you'll be safe enough, I reckon."

"The point," referred to a little promontory

on the Ohio, near the spot where Simon and Tom had first landed. It was perhaps six miles from their present habitation, and from this spot the lone traveler might put forth in a canoe and float safely down the Ohio to the falls, where a small settlement had been lately formed.

The extra rifle of which Simon spoke was one which had been procured from the French trader early in the spring, and he and Tom cheerfully relinquished it, in the generous manner of the early frontiersmen. It was decided to leave Hendricks at the cabin while Tom and Simon accompanied Fitzpatrick to the Ohio and saw him safely on his way.

"Too bad we hev'n't got a gun fur him," worried Simon, indicating Hendricks.

"We hev'n't needed a gun all while we've been here, 'cept fur to keep the buffler away an' shoo the turkeys out of our front yard," Tom reminded him.

"You three will need your guns going through the woods," added Hendricks, "you never can tell what will happen out there. But I'm safe enough right here, I reckon, with this tomahawk of Simon's."

As there seemed nothing else to do about it, Simon resigned himself to leaving his new friend behind, although, as he said, "a man in the woods without a gun is no better'n a baby."

120 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

The little party of three made their way to the "point" with no difficulty of any kind, and saw nothing on the way that could arouse even their ready suspicion. They made their way to the spot where Tom and Simon had sunk their canoe many months before, and recovered it easily. Fitzpatrick was very grateful for their concern over his safety, and genuinely sorry to part from them.

"I hope you'll change your mind and come along down the Ohio soon," he told them. "Look me up whenever you do, and I'll fit you out if you need it, same as you've done for me."

Then he stepped into the dugout, took up the paddle, and swung into the turgid Ohio. A bend in the river hid him from sight, while Tom and Simon stood on the shore.

"Got another mouth to feed now," observed Tom presently, "what do you say to gettin' a little fresh game afore we go back?"

Simon had only one answer for such a question, under any circumstances; he was already ready for a hunt. The two friends, therefore, spent the remainder of the day roaming through the wilderness, tracking various kinds of game whose trails they crossed. When darkness fell they made a rude camp in the spot in which they happened to be at the moment, and spent the night in sound sleep, undisturbed by any mis-

givings about the safety of Hendricks, back in the cosy cabin hidden in the cane.

Next day the return journey was slow, for both men were loaded down with the dressed meat from the game they had taken the day before.

"Old Hendricks'll be glad to see us, I reckon," said Simon confidently when they were near home, just as the sun was setting.

"I'll pretend I'm a turkey a gobblerin' in the yard—thet'll bring him to the door," said Tom, and began to gobble vigorously.

"Thet's fine," Simon assured him, "ef I didn't see you-all, I'd shore think you wuz a turkey, Tom."

To their keen gaze the tiny cabin, however, presented a blank front. Hendricks did not come to the door, nor even peer out of the window; the original shanty that Simon and Tom had built had been long ago replaced by a sure-enough log house, which could better withstand the dangers to which such a dwelling-place might be subjected.

"Huh, 'pears like he ain't so all-fired glad to see us," said Simon, a trifle uneasily. Almost unconsciously the two quickened their steps. The door, unlatched, yielded easily to their hands. There was no one inside.

Speechless, Simon and Tom stood in the mid-

122 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

dle of the floor, gazing with stricken eyes at the wreck of their possessions. Their furs, of which they had had a goodly supply, had disappeared altogether; the rude furnishings of the hut were strewn about, splintered and useless; an attempt had been made to set fire to the cabin, but the greenness of the logs had prevented it from gaining much headway.

Still without speaking, Simon stooped and picked up an eagle feather that lay on the floor.

"I wonder if Hendricks got away?" he said, regarding the feather, which, sharpened at the end, showed that it had decorated a warrior's headdress.

"He had no gun," Tom reminded him.

"Ef he wuz taken captive his prints 'll show," said Simon, moving toward the door.

Tom followed, and presently, behind the cabin, they came across the plain imprint of moccasined feet. For a few yards the earth was soft, and it was easy to discern four sets of footprints—but they were all, plainly, made by redmen.

"He got away!" cried Simon, in joyous relief.

But Tom was less exuberant.

"Maybe he did," said he, "an' maybe didn't."

Caution decreed that they should find out whether or not the marauders were still lurking in the neighborhood, and, although the trail was soon lost, Simon and Tom kept on in the direc-

tion they believed the savages had gone, now and then finding evidence, however slight, that they were on the right track. It was almost dark, and they were about to give up the search, since there was no chance of finding the trail at night, when, at a distance from a little ravine, familiar to both men, they suddenly caught the sound of distant whooping.

"Celebratin' a vict'ry," said Simon, gloomily.

As they stood looking toward the dark screen of bushes that they knew edged the ravine, they saw a thin spiral of smoke, so faint, in the deepening dusk, as to be almost invisible. The whoops became louder, and mingled with chanting, and a glow appeared and grew against the sky.

"Reckon we better save our hair while thar's time," whispered Simon. "Thet may be a sure-enough war band thet our sneakin' crew has joined."

Without more ado the pair took to their heels and fled in the opposite direction, never stopping until, weary of flight that appeared unnecessary, they hid themselves in a thicket and fell asleep.

It was noon when they were awakened by the warmth of the sun on their faces.

"'Pears plumb foolish, our runnin' off so far," remarked Simon. "Here we've lived in our cabin ez peaceful ez a pair o' wild pigeons, an' never

124 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

so much ez seen a Ingen afore in these parts. Fur all we know, Hendricks might've just run off of his own accord, an' the redskins thet visited us might 've been just natchally destructive o' property but not so all-fired anxious to take our scalps."

They talked along in this strain for a while, reassuring themselves, and after a while it was decided to return home, first making a detour to discover if the Indian band had moved on. With infinite precaution, noiseless as panthers, the two crept close to the ravine where they had seen the fire the night before. They approached slowly, slipping from tree to tree and from thicket to thicket, and finally, assured by a hundred signs that no redskin lurked near, they stepped from behind some bushes and stood, gazing with horrified eyes at the smoldering remains of a huge fire that had blazed around—a stake!

A black, charred mass lay on top of the still glowing coals; somber stains were splashed upon the fair green turf, and, their hearts heavy, Simon and Tom drew nearer to the spot where, they now knew, their friend had met a horrible fate. The torturers had cut the top from a small red-oak, and using the tree for a stake, had evidently kindled a slow fire just far enough away for the flames to lick the body of their unfortunate captive for hour after hour, without

inflicting death. Pointed wooden splinters, brown-stained, lay here and there; it was plain that the inhuman wretches had used them to inflict hundreds of tiny gashes upon their victim, increasing his pain by slow stages, yet being careful to keep him alive.

"To think that we might 've saved him ef we'd come nearer last night!" mourned Simon.

"More like we'd hev lost our own topknots." Tom realized the dangers in the way of rescuing a captive, once he was secured by the redmen.

"I would 've tried anyway—poor feller, the odds were agin him. He had no gun."

Tom was busy making a little hole in the earth with his tomahawk.

"Thar's not much to bury—come on, Sharp-eye, give a hand and let's get out o' here."

"I couldn't draw a bead on a buffler." Simon brushed his hand across his eyes. "But I'll do what I kin to help you without usin' my eyes."

The simple little burial rite was soon performed, and the two friends lost no time in returning to their cabin.

"Reckon it's safe to stay here any longer?" suggested Tom anxiously, that night, as they sat eating their supper.

"Safe ez anywhar's round here." Simon was making short work of a large ear of corn. "We've got our little garden, an' a good, strong

126 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

house, an' our rifles. O' course, if you wuz thinkin' o' goin' back to a settlement——"

"No, I'm with you thar, Simon. I don't hold with livin' in a town."

"Then we'll stick, at least until the Ingens get real rambunctious." Simon heaved a sigh of contentment, and rolled over on the bare floor.

"We'll hev to git our house all furnished over agin," he added.

"The woods is full o' furnishin's," replied his companion, likewise trying to make himself comfortable without the furs upon which they were accustomed to sleep.

"We'll hev our downy couches back afore a new moon is out." He was immediately asleep, but for a long time Simon, tired as he was, lay awake, listening to the sighing of the summer wind in the cane.

"Pore feller—ef we'd only got nearer——" was his last thought before he, too, slept.

CHAPTER XIII

NEWS OF THE REVOLUTION FILTERS BACK

SUMMER waned; the green corn-patch turned golden, and the air was full of that sadness which belongs to autumn. Tom and Simon, accustomed as they were to the wilderness, began to feel it. Then, too, a life of ease was irksome to both, and an existence which did not include a daily risk of life seemed to them tiresomely easy. Simon, especially, grew restless, and wandered for miles on constant hunting trips. The salt-lick which he had discovered in the summer, had a particular fascination for him, and his steps often turned in that direction.

One day he found that someone had preceded him. Following idly a trail through the heavy cane, he came upon the print of moccasins.

"A white man! They all seem to come here—but that's because all the traces lead to the springs." Simon's steps quickened in anticipation.

Beside the largest spring stood a heavy-set white man, in the dress of the borderer. Simon's rifle was always ready for instant use; he ad-

128 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

vanced warily, prepared to greet a friend or to encounter an enemy.

"Brung down many to-day?" he inquired, assuming that the stranger was on a hunting trip.

The other shook his head.

"An elk back yonder. Had plenty of other shots, but I'm too fur away from home to get myself all loaded up with meat."

"Then you-all ain't campin' hereabouts?"

"Just explorin' round a bit. My name's Michael Stoner, and I come from Boone's Station."

"Whar's that?"

The stranger's jaw dropped.

"Ain't you-all heard tell o' Daniel Boone, an' the hull crowd o' settlers he's led into the wilderness?"

"I heard tell o' Daniel Boone, to be sure." Simon was offended at the other's manner. "They ain't many woodsmen as don't know about Boone."

"Wal, he got a commission from Dick Henderson, a lawyer out in North Carolina, to start a fourteenth colony out here in Kain-tuck-ee. And he done it."

It was Simon's turn to look thunderstruck.

"Wal, bust my buckskins," slapping the garments in question to show the force of the expletive. "An' Tom an' me's been thinkin'

all along that we wuz the fust settlers in Kain-tuck-ee!"

"What! Have you got a settlement, too?"

"Finest piece o' land this side o' sundown. Six mile or so north o' here. Come along, stranger, an' we'll put you up fur the night."

On the way to the lone cabin of Simon's "settlement," he learned of great doings in the world beyond the wilderness. The American colonists, it seemed, had rebelled against King George, and were determined to throw off the British yoke of government. Simon's eyes grew round with wonder as he listened to the tale the stranger had to tell, and when they reached the little clearing in the cane, he could hardly wait to tell the astounding news to Tom.

"Hullo, thar, you ornery ol' b'ar you!" he shouted at the top of his lungs as soon as the cabin was in sight.

Tom rushed out to find the cause of the commotion.

"The folks up Massachusetts way hez started an uprisin' agin the King!" Simon informed him.

"An' the King's furious an' is fillin' up the country with his agents, a-tryin' to drive all the folks along the Ohio back across the mountains, whar he kin get at 'em easier. But Michael Stoner here says Daniel Boone's got a big settle-

130 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

ment on the Kain-tuck-ee River, an' they're a-goin' to stick!"

"Howdy, Stranger," says Tom, advancing and shaking hands gravely. "This is great news you bring us."

"He says Boone's got a reg'lar fort," Simon put in.

"Oh, there's more than one," Stoner said, to Tom. "There's five more settlements round about Boone's, all begun this year. The country's growin', let me tell you!"

It was a hearty meal that Tom set before the guest that night, but neither he nor Simon permitted him to devote himself entirely to its delights. Bit by bit, he gave them the story of the War of the Revolution, broken out that spring. To Simon and Tom, the battle of Lexington was a fitting reply to the King's attempts at taxation—wasn't the country the property of those who fought the wilderness and the redman to win it?

"Do you reckon the war'll get out thisaway?" asked Simon, hopefully.

"It shorely will," the visitor assured him, earnestly. "'Hairbuyer' Harrison, the British Governor of Detroit, is aimin' to drive all settlers back over the mountains."

"'Hairbuyer'! Whar'd he git that name?"

"He's offered a bounty fur the hair of Amer-

ican soldiers." Michael Stoner's face was grim.

"He'd buy mine dear." Simon's reply held no hesitation in it.

"The time will come," continued the visitor, "when every settlement in the Ohio country will need all the men it can get."

Simon and Tom pondered his words.

"Reckon we ought to jine up with one of 'em?" Simon finally inquired.

"Reckon we ought." Tom wasted no words.

"You'll find life mighty agreeable at Boone's Station," Michael Stoner declared.

So it was that when the visitor from the first settlement on the Kentucky River set out for home on the following day, he was accompanied by Simon Kenton and Tom Williams. They had few possessions to take with them, beyond their supply of ammunition. (The Indians had seen to that a month before!) The three men, therefore, made swift progress in the direction of the Kentucky River, a distance of about forty miles from the cane-patch that Simon had so joyfully discovered early in the year.

The second day's journey found them far to the south. Simon, whose ears were as sharp as his eyes, detected a sound like distant thunder, as they were resting after the mid-day meal, on the top of one of the gentle eminences characteristic of the country. It was a wooded knoll,

132 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

and the three were lying at full length on the grass beneath a huge oak. Simon sat up suddenly, his head bent forward in the direction of the sound.

"Hear the Hairbuyer comin', Simon?" Tom had his humorous moments.

"No, but I hear a hair-raiser."

The far-away rumbling was now apparent to the other two, and they, too, sat up sharply.

"Buffler!" declared Tom. "But why the uncommon uproar?"

"It's either a bigger herd than ever we seed, or they're frightened about somethin'." Simon was standing now, straining his eyes toward the horizon. Soon an immense black cloud seemed to detach itself from the place where the green of distant trees met the blue heavens, and swept furiously along the levels before them, the dust whirling in great puffs above it.

"Comin' straight fur us, by my buttons!" Michael Stoner had not yet lived long enough on the frontier to face its sudden dangers with an unmoved heart.

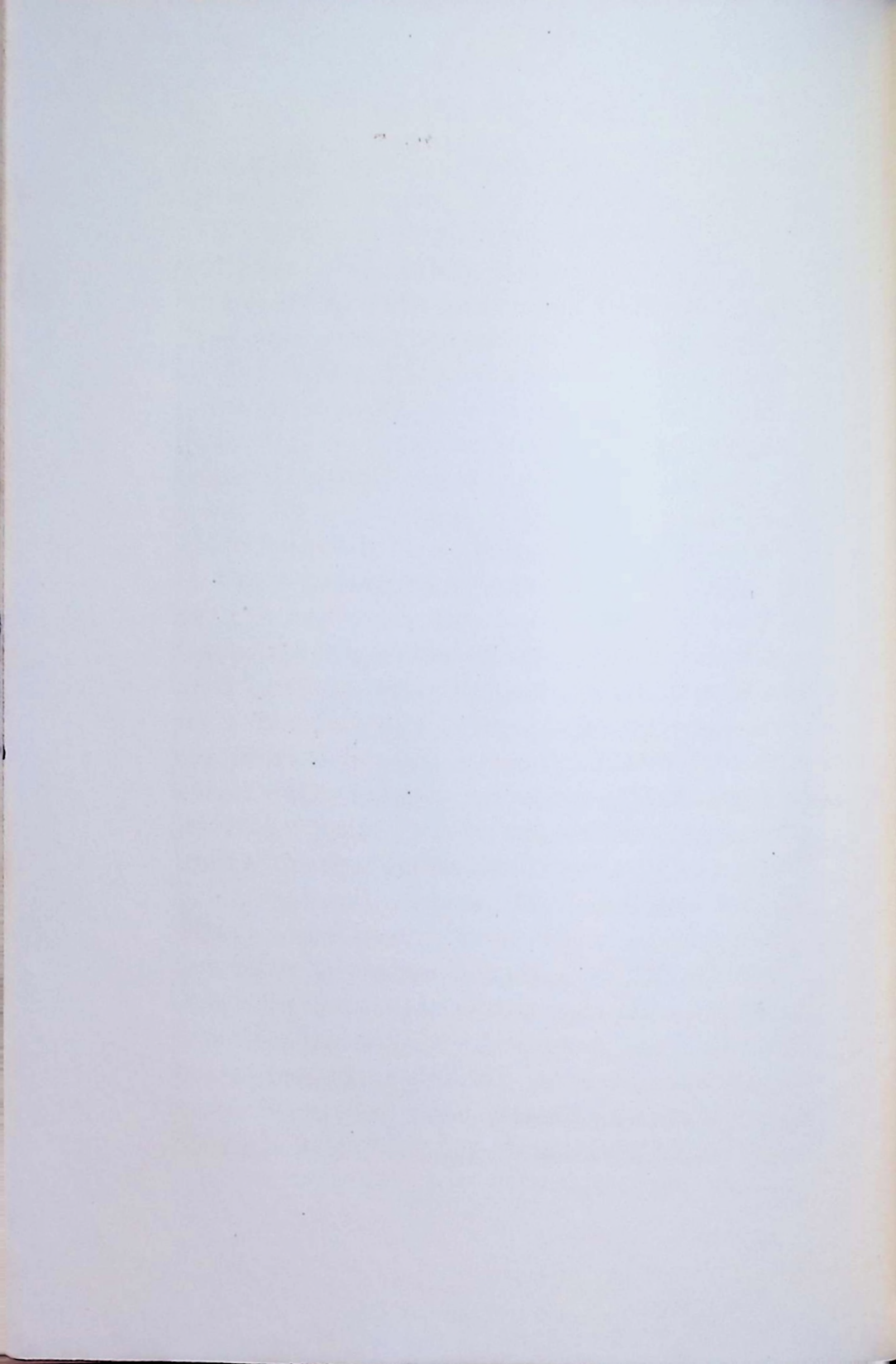
But Simon had made a discovery.

"Look at thet! Look at thet! A painter a-ridin' on a buffler!"

Sure enough, to the back of one of the largest buffaloes of the herd, clung a big panther, its teeth and nails fastened in its steed's hide. The



ONWARD SWEEP THE HERD WITH THE SPEED OF THE
RUSHING WIND



blood ran in streams down the buffalo's sides, as it plunged and shook its immense body in its efforts to dislodge the unwelcome rider. The fury of its hoofs had communicated itself to the rest of the herd, and every animal in the drove was plunging heedlessly in a wild stampede, bellowing and snorting in wild terror.

"They'll stamp us out!" Stoner was trembling with alarm.

"I'll attend to that," Simon drawled reassuringly, raising his rifle.

Onward swept the herd, with the speed of the rushing wind; the whole plain seemed full of writhing black bodies and stout horns. The panther-ridden fellow, an immense bull, plunged ahead of the rest, his tail erect, his head close to the ground, while his roar of agony rent the air. Simon took deliberate aim. Michael Stoner thought that he would never fire, and mistrusted what a single shot, or two, or three, could do. Apparently the creatures meant to trample them all into the earth. He saw the flaming eyes of the agonized bull, and then—Simon's rifle cracked! The panther loosened its hold; fell to the ground. Startled by the sound of the shot, the great bull stopped for an instant, and stood pawing the ground. The others stopped behind him. Then, like a flash, away from the direction from which the sound and the flash and smoke

134 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

had come, the monster whirled off around the base of the hillock upon which the men stood. Behind him, like a tornado, swept the herd.

"Shoot, Tom—air you-all paralyzed?" Simon's tone was frantic. Tom, in response, raised his rifle and fired, just in time to bring down one of the tail-enders.

"I wish I could foller 'em!"

"You'd hev to travel purty fast, Simon," retorted Tom. "Anyways, one buffler's enough to give us steaks, so what do we want of any more?"

The instinct of the chase died hard in Simon, as, sighing, he settled down to helping dress the buffalo meat, which would be needed as they went along, for the rapid journey through the forest sharpened the vigorous appetites of all three men. The choice meat prepared and packed, the march to the river was resumed without delay. In a short while they came across the blazes Michael Stoner had cut the day before, to indicate the location of the elk he had slain, and they followed them to retrieve the animal. It was sundown by the time the elk was ready for packing, and the three decided to look for a place to spend the night.

"There's a big hole in the ground, hereabouts," Michael declared. "I noticed it yesterday. It looked fur all the world ez though a big tree had been torn up by the roots, only it must have

been a powerful big tree, fur it was an enormous hole."

"Think you kin find it agin?" Simon was scanning the surrounding country with anxious eyes.

"Reckon I kin. I remember that big beech grove yonder."

Led by Stoner, the search for the immense hole that seemed an ideal camping place for the night was pursued with great vigor, until, in truth, they did come upon the very place. It was very deep, as Michael had said, and about ten feet across.

"The very spot fur us!" cried Simon, when he saw it. "I never did see a finer nat'chal home fur woodsmen. We'll just build a rip-roarin' fire in the middle, an' we'll be ez cozy ez b'ars in a holler tree."

Overhanging the little hollow was a dead pine, its branches stark and bare against the deepening dusk.

"We'll hang our meat to thet limb yonder," continued Simon, pointing to one great bough that stretched its length over the cup-like hollow, and proceeded to climb the tree.

"Look out," Tom warned him, as he began making his way out along the big branch.

"It won't break—not under such a frail weight ez mine," Simon reassured him, twining his huge

136 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

body dexterously around the limb. "Hand me your packs."

The meat was passed up to him, and in a short time he had it securely tied, out of the reach of prowling animals. Michael, meanwhile, had busied himself with flint and steel, and was coaxing a blaze among a pile of leaves and twigs. Over the fire, which was soon crackling merrily, the travelers were presently roasting the choice bits of elk meat which they had saved out for their supper. They ate with relish, sitting close to the blaze, for the night was growing chill.

"Shall we stand watch?" Michael wanted to know.

"Quite onnecessary, I say," answered Simon. "Tom an' I hez got plumb used to campin' out alone, round these parts, an' we hevn't hed to keep watch o' late. O' course, thar wuz some Ingens round a while back, but they were the only ones we seed all summer. An' it's pretty certain there's none around here now, or we'd hev seed their tracks."

"Thet's right," Tom joined in. "Make your mind easy, Stoner Ef thar wuz any Ingens round here, Sharp-eye would've found their tracks."

So the three made comfortable beds of leaves and small twigs, heaped more logs upon the fire, and prepared for a night of sound sleep as soon

as their hunger was satisfied. They lay with their feet to the blaze, which roared and crackled, lulling them promptly to sleep.

It was deep, black night when Simon awoke with the suddenness of the woodsman, sure that he had heard something, yet not knowing what it was. His swift glance took in the glowing embers to which the fire was now reduced, and traveling upward instantly, fell upon a circle of fiery spots around the top of the hollow. At the same time the snarl which had awakened him sounded again—cruel, menacing.

Simon sat up, reaching for his rifle, which he laid across his knees. He was not afraid of wolves, for he knew that it was the fresh-killed meat which he had tied to the tree that they were after, and that they were unlikely even to attempt an attack upon armed men. So he sat up, watching the shifting circle of eyes above him, listening to the growling of the marauders, and catching, now and then, the flash of cruel white teeth. Rested by his dreamless sleep, he decided to wait a while to see what the animals would do, before scattering them with a rifle shot.

As always when he was awake at night, Simon went back in his mind to the little Virginian home he had left so long ago. The questions that had never been answered rose again before him—

138 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

when had they found William Veach? How long had they sought him—Simon? It was not likely they would even seek to capture him now, even if they found out where he was. The years must have wiped out any active resentment the Veaches felt, he thought, as he had thought many times before. As long as he stayed away from the scene of his unfortunate encounter, they would hardly attempt to stretch out the arm of the law against him.

Half dreaming, seeing again the lifeless William, limp on the ground before him in the woods, Simon forgot where he was, forgot the circle of hungry eyes above him. He was startled when a huge gray body shot through the air, landed on the bed of coals, and scrambled hastily up the side of the hollow, scattering embers as he fled.

"What in tarnation's that?" exclaimed Tom, seizing his rifle as he leaped to his feet. Michael, wakened from sound sleep, sat staring as if bewitched by the red, glaring eyes above.

"Set down, Tom," said Simon, composedly. "It's only a wolf after our meat. Thar's nigh onto a dozen up thar."

"We kin make short work of 'em."

"No use shootin' off in the dark—wait. We'll get some good shots, I promise you-all."

Mystified, but willing to obey, Tom sat down

again, and Michael, grasping his own rifle, sat waiting, too.

After a while Simon detected a shadowy form gathering itself for a spring.

"Now!" he murmured.

The animal made a spring for the meat, dangling from the bough above, barely missed it, and fell into the fire, as the other had done. But Simon was ready for him this time, and no sooner had he struck the embers than the hammer of his rifle fell, and the great creature lay dead with a bullet in his brain.

One by one the savage creatures above essayed to reach the meat, and one by one they fell into the bed of coals. The men took turns in dispatching them, so as to waste no lead, and when four were finished in this way, the others lost heart and fled.

"Tired o' the game," remarked Simon, rising and beginning to throw the carcasses from the hollow.

"We'll build up a big enough fire to last till dawn, an' I reckon they won't bother us agin," said Tom, suiting the action to the word. So, confident that their own senses would warn them if danger approached once more, they lay down again, and this time their rest was undisturbed until the birds, greeting the day noisily, awoke them from their slumbers.

CHAPTER XIV

A PERILOUS JOURNEY

“**I**F we kin only git our hands on that powder! I hev’n’t enough fur a half a dozen shoots myself.”

Simon glanced uneasily at his long rifle, resting on the antlers above the fireplace of the little cabin at M’Clelland’s Fort, where he was, for the time being, making his home with the family of Josiah Dickson. Several months had passed since he and Tom Williams had accompanied Michael Stoner to the settlements along the Kentucky River—months darkened by the growing depredations of the Indians. Simon had visited each of the settlements in turn—Booneborough, Harrodsburg, Huston’s and Hingston’s forts, all named after the men who were the real leaders in each little group of frontiersmen. Hingston’s Station had been recently abandoned; the Indians drove off the settlers’ cattle, stole their horses, and warred constantly on those who tried to plant the fields, so that life in this tiny village had grown unsupportable, and the inhabitants fled to join their strength to that of the settlement known as M’Clelland’s.

"We'll get it all right. You don't suppose I brought it all the way from Fort Fincastle to lose it now, do you?"

George Rogers Clark, the young Virginian with whom Simon had pushed his way through the Ohio country in that recent upheaval between the Indians and the white settlers which had now become famous as Dunmore's War, was a new arrival at M'Clelland's. He was, by this time, a commissioned officer in the Revolutionary army—a major—and had been sent by Virginia with ammunition for the plucky folk standing their ground in Kentucky despite the frequent raids by the red men, which were instigated by British officers.

"How much hev you got?" Josiah Dickson was an interested member of the group that crowded the little cabin to the door, anxious to hear whatever news the young soldiers might have brought.

"Five hundred pounds of powder, and lead in proportion."

"Ha! Fifteen thousand little pills!" A young fellow in the crowd slapped the man next to him vigorously on the back. "Whoop it up," he shouted, beginning an unearthly yell, an imitation of the Indian war-cry, in which the whole roomful at once joined.

Major Clark, who had joined in as heartily as

142 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

the others, resumed his story when the hubbub had died down.

"Three Islands was as near as we could get it. Two of us couldn't begin to haul that load through the woods. While we could use the canoe, it was simple enough." A lawyer by the name of Jones had come with the major to help with transporting the heavy cargo, but men were needed badly at various points open to the British attack at this time, and it was impossible to spare enough actually to bring the ammunition to the settlers' doors. That they would have to do for themselves.

"I ain't a-goin' to lose any time," announced Simon. "I want that powder, an' I want it bad."

"That's the stuff! Start after it now! We don't want to take chances on losin' it." The eagerness of all the men was apparent in their voices as they crowded nearer to the major and declared their sentiments.

"How many men can you send for it?" Major Clark's tones were crisp.

Simon made a hasty calculation.

"Maybe fifteen."

"No, that's won't do." The officer shook his head. "Twenty-five at least will be needed. We can't risk the loss of so much powder and lead. It's mighty scarce right at the front."

"There ain't twenty-five men can be spared in

the whole place," returned Simon, "an' we couldn't send 'em all out at once even if thar wuz. Thet would be all the Ingens would want to know."

"Then the best thing we can do is to get help from Harrods at once. They've got a pretty big handful of men up there, and I reckon they'll help us out. I'll go myself and ask them."

"An' I'll go with you." Simon was all eagerness, for the young major was as close a friend as he boasted.

"Thanks, Simon. I wouldn't ask for a better bodyguard." The major laughed, but his eyes were warm as they rested on the bulky figure huddled upon a chair at the opposite side of the fireplace. Plans for the expedition went on swiftly.

"We'd best git our signals fixed in case o' runnin' head-on into a war-party," said Simon. "Thar's been a heap of 'em prowlin' around these woods o' late. We might use our old signals thet we had when you an' me an' Simon Girty wuz scoutin' fur General Lewis."

"So we might," answered the major. "Let's see if I remember—the hoot of an owl followed by the howl of the wolf. The answer to be the howl of the wolf if there's no danger, or the hoot of the owl if danger is near."

"Right the fust time—bust my buckskins!"

shouted Simon, delighted with this proof that his former association with Major Clark had not been forgotten.

"I'm not likely to forget that trip—nor anything concerned with it," retorted Clark.

Simon grew reminiscent.

"Do you remember thet time Simon Girty slipped when we wuz a-wadin' a crick an'——"

"Simon Girty!" Major Clark's eyes suddenly flashed fire. "Do you know what Simon Girty is now?"

Simon Kenton looked startled at the interruption and the major's fiery glance.

"Why, I haven't heard o' him since thet time."

"The less you hear of him the better. The fellow's a renegade."

"A what? Do you-all mean thet he's a-fightin' agin *us*?"

"Yes. He's run off with the Indians. In the pay of the British, they say."

"Old Simon! Why, I liked the fellow!" Simon Kenton's honest blue eyes were wide with pain.

Next day, when he and Major Clark were pressing swiftly through the woods toward Harrodsburg, Simon brought up the subject again.

"Whatever made Simon Girty turn his coat?" he inquired in a puzzled way.

Major Clark betrayed equal perplexity.

"Nobody knows. He didn't go alone—there were a couple of other fellows—one named McKee, and one Elliott. Girty had been working around Fort Pitt as an interpreter for some time—just what induced him to run off to the Indians I can't say. He's a dangerous foe to the Americans, too. He's strong, you know, and daring."

Simon was silent. That a white man should deliberately turn against his own kind and throw in his lot with savages—savages, too, who were waging the most cruel war on white women and children—was entirely incomprehensible to him.

The trail which the two were following led along the Kentucky River, skirting the foot of the many precipices which edged the wild stream. They were making the best haste they could, taking only a few hours of sleep at night, for the men they had left behind were almost without ammunition—certainly they were unprepared to withstand even a short siege. Although it was mid-winter, the air was mild during the day, and the deep forest in which they were traveling was no barren and leafless waste. Laurel trees, still fully clothed, formed a great portion of this part of the woods, and many of the other trees were hung thick with persimmons, candied by the frost, and very good to eat, while in some places

146 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

great bunches of wild grapes still clung to the heavy, tangled vines.

"Splendid country!" exclaimed George Clark, enthusiastically, as they approached a steep hillside.

"Worth fighting for—eh, Simon?"

Simon grinned appreciatively.

"I reckon there's a view worth climbing for," continued Clark, pointing toward the towering hill. "We might go up and have a look. It won't delay us more than half an hour."

So they left the trail and forced their way through brier bushes and matted vines, toward the summit of the steep rise.

"Ah!" said Major Clark, when they reached the top.

They were standing on a precipice three hundred feet above the river rolling darkly in the channel below, through walls of solid rock. On every side the country lay spread before them—vast tracts of woods, broken for wide spaces by open rolling country where there were no trees at all and where the ground rose and fell in gentle mounds. Here and there a winding stream sparkled in the sunlight, and the stretches of tall cane waved gently in the light breeze.

"Mighty purty." Simon took a deep breath, revolving on his heel until he was facing the way they had just come. His eye fell on a spot at

the foot of the slope, close to the trail below, and had Major Clark been looking at his companion, he would have seen the sudden widening of the pupil. But that involuntary movement of his eye alone showed that Simon had seen something unusual. The smile with which he had been regarding the landscape never left his face; no start of surprise gave his companion—or the watchful eyes below—the slightest hint that he had seen anything save the untroubled beauty of a Kentucky scene before him. To George Clark's: "Look, Simon, how straight the bank falls—fun to climb down that way!" he turned easily and, peering with the major into the dark depths below, murmured:

"Don't turn—a turkey-feather's a-standin' up straight on the trail behind us."

"Trapped! We must have been followed."

Straightening up, Simon turned again toward the trail, and without looking downward at all, waved his hand toward the distant horizon, as if pointing out some far-away object, while he continued:

"Thar's only one way to git down—the river side!"

"Three hundred feet of rock!" Major Clark's whisper was almost a groan.

"The trees are thick at that end—we could

drop down from thar—they wouldn't know we've gone."

"It's too steep, I tell you! We aren't flies—and with our rifles——"

Simon began to dance, as if full of the joy of living and the most carefree creature in existence. He caught George's hand, compelling him to dance too. For a moment they danced in a circle, then drifted toward the clump of trees that covered the opposite end of the hill. Simon, still dancing heedlessly, had his coonskin cap whisked from his head by a low-hanging vine, and as he replaced it his glance rested on the vine that had struck him. It was a wild-grape vine, thick and sturdy, trailing its length all over the tree beneath which they stood and continuing its way over bushes and weeds. It had caught the next tree in its meshes, and the next, and the next, swinging from their boughs in great loops and sending out inquiring tendrils in every direction.

"A rope—George—a rope!" Simon had his hunting knife out and had whipped through the stalk at the root. Hand over hand, he began to reel in the vine, as a sailor would pull in a rope, until, with several yards at his feet, the natural "rope" caught and he was forced to cut through it.

"We'll knot them together—dance back into

the open agin, man," he whispered. "They won't suspect us of anythin' ef they see you-all."

While Major Clark moved out upon the open side of the hill once more, in a leisurely fashion, as if bent on enjoying the view from every angle, Simon pulled and cut at the giant vine, and knotted the ends securely, drawing them tight with his fingers that had a grip of iron. Presently George sauntered back, and once in the shelter of the grove, began to cut and tie as swiftly as Simon was doing.

"They'll suspect us, if we stay here long," he whispered in a frenzy.

"They'll never think but that we'll come back thet way," returned Simon coolly. "They know how steep it is here, and they'll jist wait till we come down and nip us off without much effort. They'd jist ez soon wait all day, ef it comes to thet, when they think they've got a sure kill."

Beneath their swift fingers the rope grew amazingly.

"Careful, George, don't pull too far on thet piece, it'll bend the top boughs so they kin be seen," cautioned Simon. He took the end George tossed him and knotted it into place.

"They'll be curious, we'll hev to go out agin—let's pretend to be playin'." He skipped gayly among the trees and eluded Major Clark, who was apparently trying to grasp him. Out along

150 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

the crest of the hill they raced, Simon dodging, George pretending to try to catch him. Round and round they fled, their hearts racing madly, though the stir was not due to the exercise! Presently they were in the grove again, and with breath coming sharply they fell to their task with fingers flying faster than ever.

"It's long enough." Major Clark had been measuring the length with his arms stretched wide.

"It's strong enough," Simon whispered back, and crept to the edge of the cliff. There stood a lofty pine, its roots firm as the very rock. Around the base they wound their precious rope, and allowed its length to slip over the precipice.

"We'll show ourselves once more—they mustn't get uneasy before we get down," said Major Clark.

This time Simon dared to glance at the bushes where first he has seen the upright feather. It was still there.

"A fire will make 'em think we're eating," and he bent to gather some twigs. Soon they had a line of blue smoke curling above the clump of trees.

"Now——" The word burst simultaneously from their lips. Rifles bound to their bodies by their belts, the two men stood beneath the pine, and looked at the jagged wall which shot down

from their feet, in a sheer drop. It looked as if the river waters lapped the very base of the cliff, but they knew that a tiny beach ran below, for they could catch the barest glimpse of it between two points of rock.

Simon went first grasping the rope firmly in both hands, fitting his feet into clefts of the rocks, so as to keep from throwing his whole weight upon the cable. He was obliged to go slowly, to avoid the sharp edges, and to keep from loosening some bits of stone that, rolling from ledge to ledge, would make a sound that would tell a plain tale to the watchful foe on the other side of the hill. Slowly, painfully, he crept down the cliff, while the tumbling waters below hissed menacingly as if in anticipation of the moment when he would fall, and become their prey. Foot by foot, hand under hand, and then—at last! His feet touched solid earth, and he gave the three ripples along the rope that would tell Major Clark his turn had come.

A few minutes longer, and they would be safely on their way! The great forest lay before them, and with a few yards' start—let their enemies come on! Simon exulted in the thought, his eyes anxiously watching the figure of his comrade as it crawled down the side of the precipice—so slowly—it seemed to him, waiting below. He wrenched his eyes away, back to the

152 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

water behind him, and his heart turned over. Mirrored suddenly in a tiny wave that splashed and wiped out the vision swiftly as it came, he caught the gleam of steel in a lean brown hand. A knife! Wheeling—

“Jump!” he shouted, and with arms spread wide, and knees braced, stood directly in the spot his comrade must strike.

CHAPTER XV

PURSUED

GEORGE ROGERS CLARK was a soldier and a woodsman as well. A warning, a command, need never be repeated for his benefit. The echo of Simon's shout had not been hurled back from the rocks before he had unclenched his hands and whirling to face the river had leapt wide of the cliff. He was thirty feet from the beach when the cry came, and he shot through the air with the violence of a projectile. Simon had time for nothing but a swift admiration at the speed with which the young man had obeyed his command, when he was borne to the earth, conscious only of an inability to get his breath——

It seemed to him that he had been asleep for a long time, when, his face dripping cold water, he opened his eyes. Major Clark was bending above him, shaking his shoulder with one hand and throwing water from the river in his face with the other.

"Thank God!" he breathed. "You were only out a minute—can you stand? They'll be around the cliff——"

154 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

Simon's faculties struggled back. He saw the grape-vine cable, its length coiled beside him on the beach, and remembered. The cut rope! He was on his feet with the thought, and together the friends ran at full speed along the winding beach. It was a stony enough path they had to go, and sometimes there was no beach at all, and they leaped from jutting rock to rock until they had the ground beneath their feet once more.

"Too open here," muttered George after a while. "We'll have to strike into the woods."

"Do you-all think they've got ahead? Kin they cut us off?"

Simon was panting a bit, the recent blow he had suffered leaving him somewhat exhausted.

"They can't have gotten through the woods so fast," George assured him. "You were out only a minute, I tell you, and they probably think I was hurt by the fall when they cut the rope. They'll run around the cliff for my scalp, most likely."

"Thet's so. I reckon we're pretty well ahead of 'em, then." Simon's spirits rose. He always enjoyed outwitting the savage.

"We're not fur from Beaver Creek, I reckon," he observed, after they had run on for a few minutes.

"Yes—I know whar we are now. We kin strike out here an' git the canoe. Now don't

forgot whar it's hid—two poplar trees an' a clump of alder behind 'em. The canoe's in the alders."

Harrodsburg, to which the two were bound, was on the south side of the Kentucky River, while M'Clelland's Fort was on the north. The canoe, which would be needed in crossing the river, was one which Simon had found some time before, and had left hidden against the time when it might come in handy. Now it might well be that the canoe would save their lives, for once in it, they could paddle down the swift creek faster than the Indians could pursue them through the woods.

"We'll separate here," continued Simon, when they had turned away from the river and were running through the woods. "You-all go up about five hundred yards and then run straight ahead. I'll go down the same distance and run toward the crick too. The one thet finds the canoe fust kin git it in the crick an' wait fur the other. I'll run back toward you an' you run back toward me when you strike the crick. I know the canoe's in between somewhars."

Without more words, they started to run in opposite directions. The woods were very thick here, and the rocky soil made running very difficult, but neither man decreased his pace for that. As they disappeared from each other's view they

156 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

heard the exultant whoop that meant the savages had found their trail, and the sound winged their feet.

At the stream, which he found without difficulty, though unfamiliar with that particular region, Major Clark sought swiftly for the two poplars and the elders. But they eluded him.

"Can it be I've turned the wrong way?" he worried, for the course had been so beset with trees and underbrush that it was quite conceivable he had become confused. He ran along the bank of the creek, almost sure that he had gone more than far enough to meet Simon. Yet no poplars! A crashing among the bushes sounded suddenly behind him—a tall hemlock stood in his path. Like a squirrel he shot up the trunk and scurried far out on a lofty branch, crouching along the limb. The crashing continued, and in a moment out shot Simon! George had his mouth open to call down to him, when the triumphant yell of an Indian close by made his hair rise on his head. They were right on his trail then! George clung weakly to the bough.

But Simon was not yet caught. He darted swiftly to a clump of bushes close to the major's tree—and, from his perch above, George saw that he had failed to recognize in his haste the two poplars uprooted by a recent storm, and the clump of alders close by.

In his excitement the major nearly forgot his own peril. He could hear the beating of his heart against the bough as he watched Simon drag the canoe from his hiding place toward the water, while among the trees a few feet away—so short a distance!—he could see the flashing brown bodies of his pursuers. Would he never reach the creek!

Splash! It was in, and Simon, paddle in hand, was pushing out from the shore. The whirr of an arrow sounded through the air, and George saw it sticking in the side of the canoe. Four savages leaped from among the trees, and believing they had an easy capture, sprang into the stream, swimming to overtake the canoe, already a quarter way across the creek. Simon, paddling for life, could not use his rifle; Major Clark, seeing another brown figure coming, dared not. The rain of arrows which had swept about the little craft ceased as the Indians in the water drew near, for those on the bank feared they might wound one of their own band. The canoe shot forward with terrific speed, making for the opposite bank, and leaving a wide space between it and one brown, feather-decked head. The other head had disappeared, and Major Clark began to hope that Simon had escaped them both. But at that very instant a brown arm shot out of the water beside the canoe and grasped its

side, attempting to upset it. The Indian had been swimming under water. Major Clark gasped, almost audibly. But Simon was a match for the redman. Never ceasing to paddle with his right hand, with his left he drew his knife, and before anyone was aware of his intention, he let it slip round the wrist of the hand that grasped the side of the canoe. With a roar of pain the Indian let go, and his comrade caught him as he sank beneath the water. Then, under cover of the general consternation at this unexpected attack, Simon raised his rifle and aimed deliberately at one of the figures on the bank. It dropped like a stone, and Simon paddled desperately on. He was now within a few feet of the shore. Standing up in the fluttering craft he leaped for a nearby rock, missed it, and fell into the water. But it was shallow at this point, and he managed to hold his rifle high enough to prevent it from getting wet. In a moment he was up and scrambling onto dry land. He turned for one brief glance toward his enemies, but they were occupied with the two stricken members of their band. Then he disappeared into the forest. George, crouching on his bough, took aim, and shot one of the savages through the brain. At this, with a howl, the two uninjured Indians, and the one whose hand Simon had nearly severed, fled, leaving their dead where they had fallen.

For a long time Major Clark remained where he was. He knew that the redmen would probably return for the bodies of their comrades, and he knew, too, that Simon would come to look for him at the spot where they had agreed to meet. So he bided his time, sure that Simon was resting in some covert. Within an hour he heard a rustling among the dead leaves, and presently two stealthy figures crept toward the two dead men on the creek bank. Major Clark knew that they did not suspect his presence, and were thoroughly unnerved by their belief in Simon's ability to shoot from a long distance. They seized their dead friends and dragged them hastily away, leaving George in full possession of the field.

Dusk slipped down upon the forest. A red squirrel, which had been sitting on the bough above Major Clark peering at him from between twigs, quirking its tail and jerking its head, decided, at last, that the strange intruder had settled down for the night, and that such an example might well be followed. George watched it go, darting overhead with the lightness of a little red leaf, finally whisking out of sight in some unseen hollow. When it was gone the woods seemed lonelier, more desolate. The man shifted his position and waited, watching the scarcely perceptible approach of night. He

160 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

strained his ears for the sound of a hushed foot-fall, the breaking of a twig to mark the coming of his comrade, but the silence hung heavy and unbroken.

Suddenly, upon his ears, accustomed to quiet, the hoot of an owl fell gratingly, and it was followed by the prolonged howl of a wolf. He returned the wolf's howl and slid down the tree trunk. From the dusk on the opposite bank Simon's tall figure emerged.

"Did they git the canoe?" he called softly.

"No; it's drifted down a ways. Follow the creek on your side and I'll keep up with you over here till we find it."

Without any further speech, which might be heard by a hidden foe, they set off along the creek, peering into the gloom for the lost canoe. Their search was soon rewarded; the light craft had been caught by some weeds a few hundred yards from the spot where Simon had abandoned it, and it was the work of a moment for Simon to jump in, discover that the paddle which he had dropped so precipitately a few hours before had fallen in the bottom of the boat, and paddle swiftly across the stream to his friend.

"Best thing to do now," observed Simon when near enough to speak in low tones, "is to cross the river right away. Then we kin git rid o' this

heavy load, which I ain't all-fired anxious to tote through these woods."

"This" was the canoe, which, although small, was no inconsiderable weight for two men in a tangled forest after dark.

"Whar did you git to, Major?" continued Simon. "Ef you wuz delayed in gittin' to the crick, it's a big wonder you-all didn't run plumb into thet band o' serpents."

"I got there ahead of you," returned Major Clark, "but I didn't see the clump of alders, and when I heard footsteps I just shinned up a tree. I had a splendid view of the whole affair, I can tell you. You did a good job on that Indian's wrist."

Simon smiled the smile of one who knows he has acquitted himself well.

"No redskins'll ever catch me nappin' with tow in my ears," he boasted.

They swung the canoe to their shoulders, and, Simon leading the way, wound in and out among the trees, like some strange monster, to the Kentucky River. There, after a search, they found a place suitable for launching their craft, dropped it upon the water, and were soon gliding silently over the dark river.

CHAPTER XVI

A MONSTER BEAR

“**A** B’AR! A big feller, too. A collar o’ them claws would be worth somethin’ to the Ingens!”

“A lot o’ tradin’ you’ll be doin’ with the Ingens, fur some moons to come, Simon.”

“But he’s uncommon big,” persisted Simon, stooping to examine the bear’s tracks in the mud of the river bank.

With fifteen men who had agreed to help bring in the precious powder from the Three Islands, in the Ohio River, Simon and Major Clark were returning from Harrodsburgh. They had already crossed the Kentucky River, and were now carrying the canoe to its old hiding place on Beaver Creek, which was almost directly in their line of march.

“A b’ar steak would taste good, you-all can’t deny that,” continued Simon plaintively.

“Well, get him then,” returned one of the others. “Only fur my part, I’m more interested in gettin’ this canoe out of sight and startin’ after that powder.”

"It won't take any time at all." Simon's fondness for hunting was uncontrollable.

"I'll go with you," a younger lad from Harrodsburgh stepped forward, his admiring eyes on Simon's rugged figure.

"Thet's the way to talk! Come on, lad, let's show 'em how quick we kin git a b'ar when we hev to."

While the rest of the party swung off along the river, Simon and his companion, looking carefully to the priming of their guns, set off through the woods at a sort of half-trot, following the huge bear-prints that were plain enough where the ground was soft, but difficult to follow wherever it was hard or stony. For long stretches at a time they seemed to be lost altogether, but Simon was too experienced a hunter to lose easily a trail which had been so marked at the beginning.

"How do you always know which way the critter went?" The younger lad's curiosity demanded satisfaction, when, after a particularly long period in which Simon had continued to stride onward, regardless of the fact that no marks were visible, suddenly, they had picked up the trail again, right in their own path.

"When you-all git to be ez old ez I be, John Simpkins," returned Simon, gravely, "you-all will be able to track a b'ar, too, I hope. Now

the way I do is this: I come to a place whar thar's no tracks of any kind, an' I jist think, 'Now, ef I wuz a b'ar, which way would I go?' An' then I go thet way."

John Simpkins looked greatly impressed by this mode of reasoning, and privately resolved to put it into practice at the next opportunity. But they had reached the end of the trail. A low growl sounded from some bushes near at hand. They were about to descend a steep hillside, following a stony gully, the dry bed of a by-gone brook. But at the warning note, both stepped back a few paces. From the bushes emerged, instead of the brown bear they had been expecting to see, a shaggy, WHITE monster!

Simon, taken aback by the unexpected apparition, nevertheless stood waiting, his rifle leveled, his eyes unwavering. John stood beside him, with his rifle also cocked, but his breath came unevenly. Never before had he seen a white bear!

For a moment nothing was heard but the crashing of the bushes as the bear, plainly furious at being thus trailed, lurched toward its pursuers, its little red eyes gleaming with malice. Then Simon pulled the trigger; the lock fell, but no report followed. He tried again, with the same result. The bear was near, fearfully near. John

Simpkins stood as if paralyzed, his rifle aimed straight at the monster, his eyes staring.

"Shoot!"

Simon spat out the word in the silence that stood out starkly as the lock of his gun fell. As if moved by the word, the trigger of John's rifle clicked, and the little leaden ball sped on its way to the bear's—forepaw!

"Run! Run like blazes!" Simon turned from the foe and sped along the crest of the hill, his long legs keeping him in advance of his shorter companion, though John, in truth, was running as he had never run in his life. But the bear ran too. It was a bare three yards from John's flying heels when Simon made a discovery and paused, for a single instant. The next he was whirling through space, in a swift descent to the Kentucky River. He had stopped when he perceived, too late, that he was running on high ground that jutted out over the river; he was sped onward through the air when John, running at full speed, was unable to check his course and struck him violently from the rear. Simon's splash was followed by another—John's—only a fraction of time later, and immediately afterward there came a third, a tremendous concussion which sprayed the water for several feet into the air. Bruin had landed in the river, too, and not three yards away!

166 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

The cold bath, instead of calming the monster's feelings, apparently only increased his rage; he was a splendid swimmer, of course, and he struck out promptly for Simon, nearest whom he had happened to fall.

"B'ars swim faster than men." The thought had scarcely flashed through Simon's brain before he had whipped out his knife, and holding it with his right hand directly in front of his body, grasped his rifle in his left, prepared to do battle with the butt of that, if his knife failed. Bruin made the distance in a few sweeping strokes and spread his huge paws wide, intending to grasp his victim. As he pressed close, the knife, held at exactly the point that would make it impossible for the bear to avoid it, sank deep into the monster's shaggy breast and buried itself in his heart. Releasing his grasp on Simon's body, Bruin floated lifelessly down the river.

But John Simpkins, mindful of Simon's fury when, a few minutes before, he had failed to pull the trigger of his rifle when a shot was all that stood between them and the bear's swift embrace, had his wits working now.

With bold strokes he swam downstream and had laid hold of his late enemy almost as soon as Simon, replacing his knife in his belt, had started to swim in pursuit. The rush of the water aided them as they steered the carcass gradually

toward the shore, and they finally got it anchored in a little cove, where washed-down logs and other débris of the river lodged it safely for the time being. It was impossible to drag the animal ashore, however, and the two hunters left it among the logs and made their way to the bank, where, pausing to get their breath, they sat down, exclaiming in admiration over the size of the animal, its strange lack of color and its huge claws.

"He's a monster, an' no mistake," said Simon proudly. "I reckon ef we push through to the trail we'll meet the rest of 'em comin' along, fur they've hed to go considerable out o' their way to hide the canoe an' ought to be a-comin' by this time. All together, we could get him to shore."

So, abandoning their prize, since they had no choice, they turned toward the Indian trail along which they knew the rest of the party would travel, but they found no fresh tracks, and, certain that their friends had not passed, sat down to await their arrival.

"Wal, we hev'n't had long to wait," observed Simon presently. His companion had heard nothing, but he knew that the sharp ears of his comrade were not easily deceived. So he did not answer, but sat staring in the direction in which Simon's gaze was fixed. Suddenly Simon leaped to his feet, swiftly adjusting his rifle, which he

168 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

had taken care to recharge before they set out. Now, even John could hear the rustling of bushes and the rattle of stones which indicated the hurrying of fear-driven feet. From the thicket burst two men, spent and pallid; immediately behind them pressed four more. Simon's eyes searched in vain for a pursuer. At sight of the two awaiting them in the trail, they stopped short, their breath coming in gasps.

"What ails you-all?" inquired Simon, calmly. "Runnin' away from your shadders?" The whole six were from M'Clelland's and known to him.

The foremost shook his head unsmilingly.

"Ingens! Bill Gradon's killed, and that feller Jones that came with Major Clark. An' Josh Dickson and Joe Rodgers have been taken prisoners!"

"Come on—we'll give 'em what-fur!" Simon was flying up the trail when a shout of entreaty from Jim Hawkins, the man who had been speaking, halted him.

"It's a war band. You-all can't do anythin'."

"How big a war band?" Simon was poised for pursuit.

"Too big to tackle. Fifty or sixty. Mingoos, with Pluggy himself leadin' 'em."

Simon came slowly back to the group.

"Air you-all goin' to let 'em git away with whites?"

"It's no use, he's tellin' you straight," chimed in another man. "We gave 'em fight an' plenty of it. Accounted fur a half dozen—but it didn't begin to make an impression on 'em. An' then we cut an' run."

"When did it happen?"

"Last night. We've been goin' ever since." The man turned ashen and shook visibly as foot-steps sounded behind them.

"Thet'll be our men." Nevertheless, Simon stood with his finger on the trigger of his gun while the sounds drew nearer. A few minutes later his own party came into view.

In the torrent of questions and exclamations that followed, it finally came out that a party of ten, very unwisely, had set out from M'Clelland's, while Simon and Major Clark were gone, with the intention of reaching the place where the ammunition was hidden. William Jones, the lawyer who had accompanied Major Clark on the trip down the Ohio from Fort Fincastle, had prevailed upon the men to go, in order that they might guard the powder and lead during the time that must elapse before a large force could be gathered for bringing it to the settlements. Jones was town-bred, and knew little of the dangers of the wilderness, except by hearsay. The other men, grown rash by reason of the fact that M'Clelland's had been spared so far by the In-

170 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

dians, had been easily persuaded to take the highly imprudent step.

"You've paid a severe price," said Major Clark, taking command by reason of his standing in the army.

"I forbid any attempt at rescue at this time. From what you say, I infer that a large war party is roaming the woods, and I fear that the settlements are in grave danger of attack. It is our duty to hasten home and protect our women and children."

Grumbling a little at the order, but bound to obey it because he realized that the major's words were true, Simon fell in with the rest as they pressed on rapidly to the fort. Only when dawn was breaking next day, and the little party, having marched without a pause throughout the night, was in sight of the stockade, did the thought of the monster bear recur to him.

"Them claws'd make a purty necklace," he mourned, inwardly.

"But thar's work to be done—an' no time fur gewgawin'."

CHAPTER XVII

THE INDIANS STRIKE

ALL that day the men and women of the fort, and even the children, worked hard in preparation for an immediate attack. Rifles were cleaned, powder and balls were laid ready to hand, greased linen bits for patches were prepared and hatchets sharpened till their edges might well cut through stone. Careful examination of the stockade was made and tiny crevices closed, so that no ball could find its way between the logs.

"It's a good fort," observed Simon to Major Clark as they were inspecting the great gate which was the only means of entrance into the enclosure.

"It is," returned the major. "It's a little extraordinary, too, Simon, when you come to think of it, that just a few small logs laid together have been sufficient to protect numbers of white people against the redmen, time and time again."

It seemed to Simon as if the day would never end. Everything possible had been done, and there was nothing to do now but wait—an irk-

172 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

some business to him. He mounted the narrow platform that ran around the inside of the stockade, and peered through a loophole, scanning the forest wall for signs of the approaching enemy. But the trees and bushes hid their secret well; there was no stir among the shrubbery, bared to the winter chill.

At sundown, all the men, at the direction of Major Clark, took turns in eating a hearty supper. Despite the excitement that everyone was under, there was no squeamishness about the matter of food.

"Cain't fight with an empty gun or an empty stomach," said Simon, relinquishing his post and settling down contentedly to the heaping plateful of pot-pie which one of the women put before him. Corn cakes and strong, hot tea completed the satisfying meal, and before the night had begun in earnest he was back at a point of vantage, together with all the men and boys of the fort. The fifteen men who had accompanied Major Clark and Simon Kenton from Harrodsburg were one with the people of the settlement, for in fighting for the homes of others they could not but feel that they were fighting for their own firesides and women, which, indeed, might be soon in similar peril.

"Ef we'd only got our hands on that thar powder," mourned Simon. "We've got everything

to stand a siege—men an' fightin' blood an' a strong fort—but we hev'n't what we need worst of all, lead an' powder."

It was a sober little garrison that watched through the night, under stern orders to reserve fire until a hit was practically assured. The dark hours brought cold winds that numbed the fingers of the men as they clutched their rifles and set them to stamping their feet.

"Mebbe they wuz only hunters an' hev gone home," volunteered one of the defenders, a new man in the settlement, with little experience in Indian warfare. "Why can't a half dozen stay an' watch, an' the rest of us git some sleep?"

Simon, who was next to him, grunted derisively. "An' we'd all wake up jist in time to lose our hair," he replied. "Don't you know the Ingens air just a-waitin' fur us to git tired and fall asleep?"

Grumbling under his breath, the other man turned his eyes again toward the forest. The branches of the trees, whipped by a merciless wind, began to toss and twist, making grotesque shadows against the star-ridden sky, and for a long time nothing was heard but their mournful sighing. At midnight hot tea was passed to the watchers, and two hours later, the gratifying beverage was sent around again. Simon, drinking like the others in huge gulps, stared stead-

fastly at the wilderness; but his mind was busy with that great store of useless powder hidden on the Three Islands. If the attack had been delayed just a few days! They could have given the red skunks a dose of lead that would keep them away from the settlements for many months to come! The eye of imagination was picturing to Simon a thrilling scene, in which he, as the keenest marksman in the fort, was standing at a corner of the palisade, with three or four boys behind him, reloading the rifles which he discharged, one after the other, first on one side and then the other, without the slightest pause, almost as quickly as they were handed to him—and he could all but hear the death-cry that followed every ringing shot.

So engrossed was he in this fancied scene, that when before his eyes there actually appeared a tiny blue point among the bushes, he drew the trigger of his rifle with the same cool deliberation that he had felt in his half-dream, and the soft thud of the Indian's bullet against a palisade log was accompanied by a sharp scream from the forest, which told that Simon's ball had sped true.

Instantly the air was filled with a horrid clamor that froze the blood in the veins of the women and girls, huddled in their rude beds inside the cabins. Whoops and yells and mocking laughter rang out over the forest, until it seemed as if the

fort was surrounded on all sides by a horde of savages larger than any with which the settlement had yet had to deal. Bullets pattered ceaselessly against the logs, burying themselves harmlessly, for the most part, though every little while one of the white men, rising above the stakes for a better shot, was grazed by an unusually well-aimed ball.

The men of the fort made little attempt to return the first furious fire of the foe.

"Let 'em spend their lead—it'll be good pickin' fur us afterward," remarked Simon, to his inexperienced neighbor, whose first thought was to fire heedlessly into the rain of bullets coming toward them. For several minutes the watchers merely kept their posts, until the initial fury of the onslaught had abated. After the first exultation of attack, the redmen settled down to more cautious shooting, waiting for a target before they fired. Now the defenders began to return the fire, aiming carefully wherever a spurt of flame showed against the darkness, and now and then an agonized cry told them that they had made a hit. But the Indians were extremely wary, and rarely exposed enough of their bodies to offer a chance of a fair shot; they merely sighted around a tree till they had found a mark, and dodged back the instant that their rifles cracked.

176 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

After an hour of this wasteful fighting, with practically nothing gained on either side, a hush suddenly fell upon the woods. Peeping through a loophole, Simon scanned the forest wall and found it innocent of any signs of life. Not a feather, not a flash of bright blanket marred its calm front. The man beside him, who had also been examining the face of the wilderness, turned a hopeful face to Simon.

"Looks like they found us too ready for 'em, and they've drawn off."

Simon permitted a smile to relax his grimly-set features.

"When Ingens draw off fur the amount o' lead we've been able to send into 'em, the moon'll be made o' green cheese," he returned. "But one thing they'll do—they'll wait till they think we're off guard an' try to rush the fort."

"Meanwhile, we might as well eat," put in Major Clark, who had come up behind the men. The greater number of the watchers were therefore drawn off and permitted to take breakfast and get some much-needed sleep, for the men most versed in Indian tactics believed that, with the coming of dawn, already visible in the sky, the redmen would withhold any further attack until they again had darkness as an ally.

Alternately resting and watching, the men of the garrison put in the day patiently enough.

They knew they had not the lead necessary to combat a really forceful and determined attack, nor even to withstand a long siege. But these men of the wilderness never looked far into the future; they were accustomed to living in the present alone, and this habit of mind made them peculiarly ready to accept any opportunity that came their way.

The sun showed a sickly face amid gray clouds for an hour or two, then gradually succumbed to their efforts to obscure him altogether, and disappeared from view. As the day wore on, the sky grew increasingly leaden and in the air hung the feel of snow. It was anything but a cheerful prospect, whichever way the besieged looked, but they ate and chatted and took their turn at the loopholes as lightheartedly as though the situation was of the pleasantest.

"Mebbe ef a big storm comes on, the Ingens'll git froze out an' go home." Simon gazed hopefully at the dull clouds.

"Mebbe—" began another man, when the sound of distant rifle shots stopped his words off short. Every man in the fort was out of doors on the instant. The sound of gun-fire had stopped, but presently it began again—scattering shots, as if from ambush. Then, after a silence, a faint cry of exultation was wafted toward the anxious listeners.

178 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

"A capture!" cried Simon.

"Some poor fellow out hunting perhaps," said a kind-hearted woman, wringing her hands.

The thought of white men in the hands of the brutal savages, so near to the fort, cast a shadow over the stout hearts of all the settlers. It was a sober lot of men and women, therefore, who awaited the twilight that would soon creep over the wilderness, hiding the foe and permitting them to renew their attack. Gloomily the men at the loopholes looked out upon the quiet scene that hid so great a menace.

Nearly an hour passed and nothing more was heard and not even a topknot showed itself above the bushes. Then from one side of the fort there came a low cry of dismay, hushed as soon as uttered. On this side of the fort there had been no attack, for here nature and the efforts of the settlers themselves had combined to clear an unusually wide space, and the first line of trees was far out of rifle range. Several of the men hurried now to this side of the stockade, and presently the word ran through all the waiting line: a white man had been bound to a tree right before the eyes of the garrison, and the Indians were even then heaping brush around him—with a purpose only too plain. More than one of the brave defenders of the little settlement shuddered as they looked, wondering who the lone stranger

might be, for it could be seen that his dress was not that of the woodsman, nor was it the garb of a soldier.

No cry came from the helpless captive, and after a time, the activities of the redmen ceased, or appeared to cease.

"They're waiting until dusk, when the pillar of flame will show up all the brighter," hazarded one of the men.

"Seems like we're jist plain cowards, lettin' a man die out thar in front of us without tryin' to save him," Simon told Major Clark.

The major shook his head.

"It seems so, but what can we do? If we leave the fort, it's certain death for us, and worse for the women. They outnumber us two to one, I believe, from the volley they were able to pour into us. And they're well supplied with lead—the British have seen to that" he added bitterly.

"It feels mighty queer, jist the same, standin' by when a white man's in trouble." Simon was troubled, and he went and looked out in the direction of the unfortunate captive, remaining motionless for many minutes, his eyes concentrated on the scene before him. Then he began to patrol the stockade, walking slowly round and round, his head bent, apparently in deep thought.

At the hour of sunset, the little light that was in the heavy sky began to fade rapidly, and a

180 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

fierce wind sprang up. Simon sought out Major Clark, with a firm step.

"I've been thinkin' about that poor lad out yonder," he began without hesitation, "an' I'm a-goin' out to help him. Ef I kin git two or three others, we kin rush the Ingens and maybe make 'em think they're surrounded."

"Impossible!" cried the major. "You'll be seen as soon as you leave the fort."

"Not when the dusk gits thick. We kin go at jist the time when it's neither light nor dark, when it's mighty hard to see anythin' a hundred yards away, fur a few minutes."

"It's certain death," returned the major.

"I've faced certain death afore," retorted Simon sturdily.

The major smiled in spite of himself. "Well, let me think for a little while," he said, and turned away.

In less than ten minutes he called to Simon.

"I've a new plan, better than yours," said he. "If we're going to risk three or four of our best marksmen, and probably lose them, it seems to me it would be more sensible to risk the whole garrison, with the very good chance of saving such men as you. We'll have enough then to make the Indians believe that we really have been reënforced from the outside. You see, if you go out with a couple of others, you will soon draw

the Indians' fire, and we won't be able to shoot at all for fear of shooting you. So we'll be in all the greater danger of being taken ourselves."

Simon seized the Major's hand.

"Thet's the way to talk, George!" he cried. "Let's give 'em what-fur out in the open. I never did like this hidin' behind a picket fence!"

"Another thing," went on Clark. "Our ammunition's bound to give out within a day or two if we stay cooped up here, and then we'll fall easy prey. So it looks as if this is our only chance of driving the redskins off."

He went away and for the next few minutes was here, there and everywhere, rapidly giving orders and explaining his plan. For the most part, the settlers were as anxious as he to be out of the fort and at the Indians, for they had chafed at the two-days inaction. There was but little time for preparation, now that twilight was fast creeping upon them, and it was a determined body of men who presently lined up with their commander at the point which had been chosen for their departure. Half a dozen men were left to guard the garrison, for it would not do to leave the women utterly unprotected. Two of these were men who had been wounded in the attack of the night before, but they were able to hold a gun. All the rest, down to boys of fourteen, and including Captain M'Clelland,

182 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

founder of the settlement, were to take part in the sally. Believing that the savages would be close to their intended victim, preparing for the death dance, in the assurance that none of the men at the fort would dare to venture out against their superior numbers, it had been decided to drop over the stockade at the side opposite to that on which the prisoner was held. Once over, the men, one by one, were to dash straight for the woods, close on each others' heels, and as soon as this shelter was reached, were to turn, one toward the right, the next toward the left, and so on. The divided forces would then creep through the woods on either side of the Indians, and open fire at the same time.

The time had come! In the dusk it was scarcely possible to distinguish the dark forms that flitted about the captive. One of the watchers had just brought word that a light had been applied to the pile of brush that encircled the unhappy prisoner.

"Kin we make it in time?" muttered Simon. A neighbor reassured him.

"They'll hev to torture him fur a while afore they let him git really burned," he answered.

"Now!" Major Clark's low voice thrilled through every listener as if it had been the loudest of clarion calls. Simon, first in the line, leaped lightly over the palisade and sped to the

wood, swiftly as an arrow. Turning to the right, he began to move quickly, but very cautiously, in the direction from which now came the cries that marked the beginning of the death dance. Close behind him came another noiseless figure, and another and another. Back in the fort the women strained their ears and breathed a sigh of relief, when, the last man having disappeared behind the trees, no sudden alarm burst out in the direction which they had taken.

Now Simon, on the right side, and Captain M'Clelland leading the forces on the left, slackened their pace, and finally dropped to their hands and knees, creeping forward an inch at a time, fearful lest a falling stone or crackling twig would betray them. They could now see the flickering light of the fire through the trees, and the weird wailing of the savage dancers rose and fell eerily. Not twenty feet from the nearest group of warriors Simon paused, and his followers, coming up one by one, silently spread out, fanwise, fifteen on each side. The last man had not taken up his position when one of the rifles, striking a bough, broke it off with a sharp crack. Instantly they could see every Indian face turned suspiciously in their direction, and in the light of the now leaping flames they could almost see the baleful glare which was being bent upon their hiding place. Before the savages had

time to do more than turn alert ears toward them, Simon deliberately aimed at a figure, arrested with uplifted knife, a pace away from the unfortunate captive. The savage fell without a sound, and as he struck the ground, a dozen shots rang out, first from one side, then the other. Simon, reloading swiftly, saw as many dark forms drop, before the rest, abandoning their victim, leaped for shelter behind the trees.

But the fire was throwing out an immense light, and with foes apparently on every side, the trees offered scant protection to the confused redmen. They tried to return the deadly fire that poured from unseen sources with unrelenting rapidity; their aim was indefinite, while the settlers' sure marksmanship was rendered unfailing by the light in which their foes were exposed. After a few minutes, while their comrades continued to fall at their feet, the remaining savages took to their heels and fled. Simon and M'Clelland led half their forces in a wild pursuit, while the rest hurried to liberate the prisoner.

Simon caught sight of a brown figure leaping from tree to tree and sent a bullet ahead of him, even as he ran. But the savage was too swift, and as Simon paused to reload, he had a glimpse of Captain M'Clelland, close behind a tall Indian with a great headdress of eagle feathers and an elaborately beaded costume.

"Pluggy himself!" he muttered, half inclined to give chase too. But no, the great chief was plainly M'Clelland's capture, he reflected, and his rifle being ready by this time, he promptly sped away in the direction his own particular enemy had taken. Gradually the noise of discharging rifles, the screams of redmen in the agonies of death, and the shouts of their pursuers died out. Simon caught sight of a single one of the foe, and sent a bullet into his back. The rifle, which fell from his dead hand, Simon hid in a tree, and ran on. But when another half hour had gone by, and there was nothing but the stillness of the forest around him, he turned back and made his way to the fort, meeting different members of his party as they too straggled back. When the count was taken that night Captain M'Clelland and two others were found to be missing, and four wounded men required the attention of the women.

CHAPTER XVIII

FEAR STALKS THE BORDER

THE following morning Simon Kenton and Bates Collier, a young man highly reputed at the settlement for bravery and marksmanship, set out on the trail of the fugitive Indians, to find out if they were still lurking in the neighborhood. In the course of their search they came upon the stiffened body of Captain M'Clelland, shot through the heart, but unscalped. Later they found the other two missing members of their party, also dead.

"Three dead!" said Simon. "Thet's three too many."

"Yes. But it might have been every one of us, the way we were fixed for powder," returned his companion.

They went back to the fort to announce their discoveries, and while the group of men busied themselves with making graves for the dead in the hard forest earth, Simon and Bates resumed their scouting duty, pursuing the Indian trail to the spot where they had crossed the Ohio.

"Looks like they've gone back to their villages." Simon gazed reflectively across the

mighty river. They were in a region which he knew very well, for it was close to the site of his recent home in the cane-brake.

"It shore does," his companion agreed. "Reckon it's safe to bring in that ammunition now."

With these tidings, accordingly, the two scouts returned to the station, and all the men who could be spared, together with those who had come from Harrodsburg for this very purpose, proceeded to the Three Islands, and without molestation of any sort, succeeded in bringing the large supply of powder and lead into the settlement.

"Won't the folks be tickled when they see this here fightin' ammunition with their own eyes?" Simon's joy was infectious as the little party drew safely near to the station.

"Hullo, what are they up to?" Major Clark, who had accompanied them on their expedition, was peering anxiously toward the fort, just visible through the trees. The cattle, instead of browsing peacefully in the clearing, were all tethered, close together, at the very gate of the stockade. The men hastened their steps and were soon inside the enclosure. And the sight that met their eyes turned their hearts to lead, for it seemed to them as if all their toil and effort, all their brave attempts to turn back the red tide that for months had poured upon them from the

north, were in vain. The settlers were abandoning the fort. Drooping women were carrying household utensils from the little cabins, and the men were engaged in fastening them to the backs of horses, along with their few farming implements and tools. As there were no roads wide enough to admit of driving wagons through the forest, all transfers of property by land had to be made on horseback. Simon stopped beside a hardy hunter, who was rolling up two large feather beds, and tying them, one on each side of a horse, to serve as a carriage for his young children.

"Goin' to chuck it?" he asked.

The other nodded.

"What's the use?" he answered dully. "No use waitin' till thar's not a man of us left to tell the tale," he replied to his own question.

"We've got the powder," Simon said proudly.

"They've got more. The British give it to 'em. I don't want my wife and children murdered afore my eyes."

The crying of children, frightened at the grim preparations around them and neglected by their busy mothers, added to the clamor which rose from stamping horses, men shouting directions, and the bellowing of cattle. Panic had been loosed in the settlement, and it was useless to try to calm the people.

"After all, they'll be safer in Harrodsburg," said Major Clark. "With the coming of spring, the Indians will undoubtedly be on the warpath, and they are growing constantly bolder."

It was plainly best for the settlers to move into the larger settlement, and no one really protested against it, for once fear had taken possession of the hearts of these lone families in the wilderness they had lost their best weapon in the fight against the red foe—their courage. So Simon and the rest helped to speed the preparations for departure, and led the way through the forest when the caravan started. It was a slow, mournful journey to Harrodsburg; canoes and rafts formed part of the equipment, for the Kentucky River had to be crossed. The fugitives had chosen a good time for their departure, however, and neither the sight of smoke from a campfire, or the recent trace of an Indian, fell under the keen eyes of their scouts. The redmen were quiet for the time being, probably convinced that the whites had had large reënforcements at the time of their last attack.

At Harrodsburg the new arrivals were received with rejoicing, for the folks of this larger station were also uneasy, because of recent depredations upon their cattle. The large supply of powder which the newcomers brought was also

190 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

a source of keen delight, and under Major Clark's direction was divided carefully and justly.

Shortly afterward a commission arrived from the Governor of Virginia, giving Major Clark official command of all the settlements in Kentucky, with power to appoint his inferior officers. Harrod, the founder of Harrodsburg, was made a captain, therefore, in the frontier army, and Daniel Boone, of Boonesborough, was promoted to a similar post.

About this time, too, Huston's Station, on the north side of the Kentucky River, was also given up, leaving out of the five settlements which Kentucky had been able to boast only two—Boonesborough and Harrodsburg. Benjamin Logan, however, of Harrodsburg, proclaimed his intention of starting a new town, not far away, and there were several others who declared their readiness to go with him. Despite the discomforts and dangers of their situation, neither of the settlements had yet begun to diminish in population, for new emigrants constantly drifted over the mountains from Virginia and North Carolina, driven by the love of adventure or discontent with conditions at home.

CHAPTER XIX

A DARING RESCUE

“**L**OOK here! Not an hour old!” Simon, riding through the forest with five companions, never ceased to examine every inch of ground over which he traveled, and his glance had fallen on the faint print of a moccasin in the soft earth beside a tiny stream. The others, ahead of him, turned and regarded the spot indicated without dismounting.

“You see things that nobody else does, Sharp-eye,” said John Haggin, a boastful youth who had come out from Harrodsburg, with Samuel Moore and Bates Collier, official scouts for that station appointed by Captain Harrod. Simon Kenton and Thomas Brooks had been designated by Captain Boone, for Boonesborough, and there were two others, belonging to the newly formed Logan’s Station, who were not in the present party. It was the duty of these scouts to visit each of the deserted stations, once weekly, and to scour the surrounding country, particularly along the Ohio River, from which direction Indian invasion was to be feared. To-day’s company, consisting of Simon, Haggin, Moore, Col-

192 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

lier, Brooks and a young Dutchman named Peter Van Doorn, had been detailed by Major Clark to go to Hingston's Station, where a quantity of flax and hemp had been abandoned. The people of Harrodsburg were sadly in need of clothing, and their own flax crop had been destroyed by the Indians the previous autumn.

"It would be a fine thing fur Kaintuck if some others could see as much as I do," retorted Simon, hotly, in answer to Haggin's slurring remark. He jumped from his horse and bent down to examine the print.

Nothing daunted by Simon's anger, Haggin rode back a few paces and surveyed the same spot indifferently.

"Looks like a bear-print to me," he remarked.

"It shore does, Simon," agreed the others, who, from a little distance, glanced back at the half-obliterated trace. Without another word Simon leaped upon his horse's back and swung off along the trail. For an hour he rode in silence, but his natural good humor had gotten the better of his temper by that time and he stopped to point out to Bates Collier a tree that stood beside the trail, and the blaze cut in its trunk, shoulder high.

"A wildcat near got me thar," he explained. "Jumped out o' that tree about a year ago an' I jist saw him in time. I put thet mark on the tree, which means 'Look up into trees ez well ez

under 'em.' ” He smiled broadly at his companion, his white teeth flashing in his brown face.

John Haggin, in the meantime, had ridden ahead of the rest, and was entirely lost to sight. The others were proceeding at a leisurely pace, as they drew near to the old fort which had been Simon's home a year ago, when they caught sight of Haggin, returning swiftly along the trail. They halted accordingly, knowing that something was amiss.

“Ingens camped around the blockhouse,” explained Haggin briefly, when near enough to talk in a low tone.

“How many?”

“Ten, maybe.”

The little party looked dubiously through the trees, as if suspecting that the redmen had already discovered their presence.

“Looks like thar'll be no flax fur new suits for one spell,” remarked Simon.

“What! Retreat without givin' the Ingens a fire? Nobody but a coward would think o' doin' that!” cried Haggin.

Simon's sunburnt face flushed darkly.

“I'll go ez fur, and fire ez free ez any man!” he said, his voice thick with rage, and digging his heels into his horse's sides, he dashed past the whole group and disappeared in the direction of the station. There was nothing to do but

194 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

follow, and this the others speedily did, soon coming upon Simon, who had dismounted and was tying his horse to a tree, just within the forest line that edged the little clearing around Hingston's Fort. From this point the block-house was clearly visible, but there were no Indians in sight. All the party, with the exception of young Van Doorn, promptly jumped to the ground and began tying their horses.

"You-all are mighty quick," said that young man, eying the forest distrustfully. "A little caution might not be out of place," he added. Before the taunt that rose to Haggins's lips could be uttered the sharp swish of an arrow cut the air and six pairs of startled eyes saw it bury itself in a tree. Immediately the silent wilderness seemed to burst into clamor; the very leaves trembled as one whoop after another was loosed in ear-splitting succession, and a rain of bullets fell around the frightened little party, spattering like hail. As one man the whole company turned and fled, abandoning their horses where they stood, for a moment's delay would have been fatal. Peter Van Doorn, secure on his mount's back, had much the best of it in the wild scrimmage, and rode at break-neck speed back over the trail. The others, separating, darted into the shelter of the trees, and soon lost sight of each other.

Simon, like the rest, ran until his breath came in painful gasps. For a half hour he had heard no sounds of a close pursuit, although occasionally, at a distance, he could hear the report of a rifle. He paused, leaning against a tree and listening intently. There was a crackling of dry branches, such as must mark the passage of the wariest creature, in that thickly wooded section. After a moment he was convinced that he had outdistanced his pursuers for the time being, and he threw himself down upon the ground. There he lay, the breath coming slowly back into his tortured lungs, his senses keenly alert to note any movement around him. He lay thus for ten minutes, then he was up and off once more. But this time he did not run at full speed; he moved swiftly, and with the agile motion of a panther; but he walked, not ran. Also, he walked with a plan; he jumped from stone to stone, where the way permitted of such going, in order to break his trail, and after a while he reached a shallow stream—the boon of the fleeing woodsman. Now for a long way Simon waded in midstream, his heart light at the thought that his trail was being so perfectly concealed, and when it came time to leave the bed of the brook, he did so with the certain knowledge that he would not be followed.

The sun had long set, and the early spring

night was well advanced when he stood at the top of a little hill, and gave the hoot of an owl, promptly followed by the weird, wailing cry of a wolf. Clear on the still air the howl of a wolf came back to him as he stood listening. He repeated his own signal, after a few minutes' wait, and was answered in the same manner. Once again he sent his questioning notes into the silence, and, for the third time, the reassuring, prolonged howl was returned.

"Different voice each time," chuckled Simon to himself. "Looks ez if three of 'em got thar safe," and he proceeded to make his way swiftly down the hillside. In the hollow at the foot was a tangled mass of fallen trees, over which it was impossible to climb in the dark. But Simon knew his way. On hands and knees he crept exploringly along the outer edge, until he recognized the formation of boughs and bushes, at an unobtrusive point. Parting the brush carefully, he crept beneath a great log, and a moment later had disappeared entirely beneath the wild disorder, the result of one of the hurricanes which frequently swept the country.

"Thet you, Simon?" a voice called cautiously, as he made his way forward.

"The same," answered Simon.

"Though I rec-nized that voice o' yourn," returned the other, whom Simon knew to be Bates

Collier. He had scarcely reached the center of the mass, where the trees and bushes had been so tossed as to permit, almost, of standing upright, when from the ridge came the owl's cry once more, followed again by the wolf's howl. The answering signal was joyfully given and the four within the safety of their snug retreat waited for the fifth member of their party to appear.

"That'll be Haggin," said Peter Van Doorn, who had been the first to reach the safety of the windfall. It was a secure spot long ago decided upon, between the scouts, as a place of refuge in time of trouble, and one to which they were all to have recourse, when they had been separated from each other and wished to meet again in that vicinity.

"Thar's two comin', not one," said Simon, a short time after, when the sound of an approach began to be heard beneath the trees.

"Thet'll be old Sam Moore," cried Bates Collier. "Thet's what I call a run o' luck, everybody safe and sound after enough lead bein' wasted to kill twice as many."

It was indeed John Haggin and Samuel Moore who finally made their appearance, and the whole crowd congratulated themselves on their extraordinary good fortune.

198 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

"But we lost our good horses," mourned Simon.

"We came mighty near losin' our lives," Bates reminded him. "And don't forget that Peter here still has his horse."

"He'll need it," put in Moore. "From what I saw I reckon there's a big war-band on the way to Harrods."

"Yes, I saw a redskin behind every tree, at one time," said Thomas Brooks. "They're on the war-path, that's plain."

"The settlers hev to be warned, an' thar's no time to lose," declared Simon. The others nodded. "If we only had our horses!" they groaned.

"Peter kin ride on alone, and the rest kin follow ez quick ez possible," said Simon. "Major Clark told me to take two o' you-all an' look the country over round Boonesborough," he added, in a worried tone; "but if a big party's on the way to attack Harrodsburg, I reckon every man'll be needed."

"That's so, Simon," agreed the others soberly. "But if there's so many redskins roamin' round it seems like the folks at Boone's had ought to be warned, too. Maybe there's Ingens lyin' around there."

"I kin go on alone, an' the rest of you kin go back," Simon decided.

So it was settled in that way, and when the

men had given themselves time for sufficient rest, and had eaten some of the jerked venison that they always carried on their expeditions, they set out through the darkness of the night, Peter Van Doorn leading his horse at the rear of the little procession. Simon stood alone, watching until the shadows engulfed his friends, then turned and strode silently in the opposite direction.

Although the spring had scarcely set in in earnest, the night was warm, and it was no hardship for Simon, accustomed as he was to loneliness and silence, to continue his journey throughout the night. With the feel of dawn in the air, he stopped for rest and food a few miles from his destination. His orders required him to search the country surrounding the station before entering, in order to give warning to the inhabitants if danger lurked near. It was useless to try to find that out while it was still dark, and Simon wisely concluded to use the time until the coming of day in recovering his own strength. So he stopped at a spring to drink long, refreshing draughts of water, and to eat heartily from his stock of dried meat. When he had had enough, he lay down in a thicket and watched the brightening sky.

As soon as it was light enough to make out possible Indian signs, he rose and began to

200 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

encircle the spot where he knew the fort lay. He worked thoroughly, constantly leaving the line of the large circle he was describing to move in smaller ones, examining the ground and the shrubbery closely. He had his pains for nothing, however; not a trace of an Indian foot was visible; not a single broken twig claimed his attention. Simon was dubious. He believed that Indians lurked in the neighborhood. As a dog scents an enemy when he is invisible to man, Simon instinctively knew that the forests around him hid red foes. But he could find no proof, and at last he gave up the search and began to approach the fort along the main way—an old Indian trail.

When he arrived at a spot from which he could see the great gates of Boonesborough, he noticed two white men standing there, apparently about to start out on a hunt. Some distance away, in a field, he saw two others engaged in driving some horses toward the fort. It was a peaceful scene, and Simon paused to survey it before stepping into the clearing.

The two men with the horses were within a few yards of the forest, directly opposite from Simon. Without warning, a rifle cracked, and then another. The men fled toward the fort, closely pursued by five Indians, firing as they ran. One of the men stumbled and fell; he was on his feet

again in an instant, but the delay cost him dear. With an exultant whoop the foremost Indian was upon him in a moment, and the redskin's tomahawk had cloven his skull. Whipping out his knife with lightning rapidity, the savage seized the dead man's long hair, commencing the operation of taking his scalp. A bullet through the heart stopped his hand, and the knife fell from his grasp. Simon, whose shot had put an end to the Indian, reloaded swiftly, as the two hunters ran forward. The four remaining Indians had now exhausted their fire, and in the face of the oncoming white men, they had no time to reload. They turned and fled, the two hunters, joined by Simon, in hot pursuit.

As the fleeing savages gained the protection of the forest, Simon turned to look back toward the fort, and discovered Captain Boone, with ten men, running to their assistance. But, as his eye swept the surrounding scene, he detected a brown figure, half hidden by a tree, taking deliberate aim at the oncoming rescuers. Almost at the instant of seeing, Simon's finger pulled the trigger of his gun, and the daring redman sprawled forward, face downward, into the clearing.

Sheltering himself behind a tree, Simon stopped to reload, and by the time his gun was ready for further use, Boone and his men had

202 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

come up, but before a word could be exchanged, they heard a rush of feet at the left, and discovered that another party of Indians, as large as their own, had gotten between them and the gate. The situation was now serious, but Daniel Boone was a quick thinker.

"Fire first—then beat our way back!" he shouted. Every man obeyed on the instant. The deafening report of the rifles rang in their ears, and the smoke from the powder half obscured their sight, as the entire party rushed straight for the fort, whirling their guns above their heads like clubs. The counter-attack was a surprise to the Indians; the white men were past before they realized what was happening; then they sent a volley of bullets after them. They were running so swiftly that the bullets went wild, however, except one; that one struck Captain Boone's leg, breaking the bone. He dropped to the ground as the useless member doubled under him; instantly a tomahawk whirled about his head. But Simon had not clubbed his gun, as had the others. He had fired, and paused a moment to reload, on an impulse. That impulse had been a fortunate one. The Indian's tomahawk flew wide of its mark, as with a wild yell the savage spun completely around and collapsed in a heap with Simon's bullet through his brain. Without a moment's loss of time, that unerring

marksman tossed aside his gun and, stooping, threw the tall figure of the wounded chief across his shoulders and ran! Only a minute or two behind the others he arrived at the stockade, slipped through the opening, and, as the great bars were thrown into place across the gates, he heard a rain of bullets, meant for him, pattering against the heavy wood.

Ready assistants ran to take the burden from Simon's shoulder, and Captain Boone was conveyed to his cabin, while the defenders of the fort emptied their rifles after the brown figures that sped back to the shelter of the woods. Late that day the great leader sent for Simon Kenton.

"Well, Simon, you have behaved like a man to-day," he said, when the young man came to his bedside. "Indeed you are a fine fellow."

Simon blushed, and stood silent. Captain Boone was a man of few words; praise from him was praise indeed. Simon "Butler" was the talk of the station that night, and tales of his brave deeds were on the tip of every tongue.

"But shucks! I only did what any man would've done ef he had the chance," Simon protested, whenever anyone attempted to congratulate him on his latest exploit.

CHAPTER XX

AN ADVENTUROUS EXPEDITION

“**T**HEY say that Clark has something up his sleeve. I wouldn’t jine up with him if I was you.”

Henry Jones, the speaker, was a recent settler in Boonesborough. Simon Kenton and John Haggin were in the crowd that was discussing the call sent out by George Rogers Clark for men “to take measures for the defense of the colonists.” Clark had lately returned from a visit to Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia, with a colonel’s commission, twelve hundred pounds in Virginia currency and authority to raise an army of seven hundred and fifty men to protect the border.

“What if he has got some scheme up his sleeve?” retorted Simon. “I’m willin’ to stand behind him, whatever it is.”

“They do say,” whispered a neighbor, “that he’s aiming to lead an expedition against the British settlements on the Mississippi.”

“Yes, I heard that story,” said John Haggin. “I know who told it, too. But I ain’t losin’ any sleep over Colonel Clark’s intentions. He’s got

the government back of him, and I reckon it's our part to take his orders."

"Good fur you, John!" cried Simon. "I'm a-goin' to start fur Corn Island to-morrow, and if I'm called on to lick the British, I'll lick 'em!"

"No man ought to leave the settlements at a time like this," declared Jones, with a sour face.

"Well, seein' as how you know more about defendin' the country than governors an' soldiers an' such like, suppose you jist stay here an' defend it your own way," replied Simon, good-naturedly.

"We're pretty low as it is," persisted Jones. "What with Boone himself captured and twenty-seven good men lost with him."

At this mention of the misfortune which had overtaken the little colony, deep dejection settled on every figure.

"'Pears like we could've done without salt easy, if we know'd what would come of goin' after it," sighed Simon.

"I reckon they're all gone for good," said another in the crowd. "They have been put to death, most likely. Anyway, they won't get a chance to escape now, after five months."

"If we'd only got on the trail a few days earlier!" mourned Simon to John Haggin.

The capture of Daniel Boone and twenty-seven salt-makers had taken place in the pre-

206 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

ceding January, several months after Simon Kenton's timely rescue of the great leader at the gate of the fort. All that fall and winter the little settlement had suffered severely from Indian raids, and nothing the whites could do sufficed to drive them from the vicinity. They outnumbered the Americans, and they were goaded on and supplied with ammunition by the British, who directed their operations from the old French posts of Detroit, Kaskaskia and Vincennes, points which, together, formed a British barrier on the northwest, for the French settlers of these towns had given their allegiance to the British. So constant were the assaults of the Indians that no corn could be grown in the cleared fields outside the stockade; the settlers' cattle were driven off and their horses stolen. Meat they had to have; and parties of hunters were accustomed to steal out of the fort after dark, and break through the Indian lines, going to a distance of twelve or fifteen miles into the forest. There they would hunt, dry the game over a fire, and, having loaded up all they could carry, return to the fort after dark again, and cautiously give a signal beneath the stockade, before they were admitted. Of course, many men lost their lives in this dangerous occupation, and frequently the settlers were without enough meat. By January they were greatly in need

of salt, and Colonel Boone, with thirty-two men, set out for the salt spring with which Simon Kenton was familiar and to which he had given the name of Blue Lick.

But misfortune dogged the Boonesborough folk. Hostile Indians came upon Boone while he was hunting alone one day to get game to supply the needs of the salt-makers, and he was obliged to surrender, and to surrender his men, in order to keep the Indians from slaying them and proceeding against the weakened fort, as had been their intention. Instead, under Boone's cunning manipulation, they carried all the salt-makers, with the exception of five who were hunting at the time of the capture, across the Ohio, into their own country. Simon Kenton and John Haggin, apprised of the misfortune to their friends by the returning hunters, hastened to follow their trail, but upon finding traces which indicated that the whole party had crossed the Ohio above the mouth of the Licking River, they realized that their quest was useless and returned with the doleful tidings.

"Who knows but what Colonel Clark's army may git a chance to rescue Boone?" said Simon, breaking the silence in which the men had reflected upon the series of disasters that had lately befallen the town.

"That would be a fine stroke, and no mis-

208 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

take!" cried Haggin. "I'm with you, Sharp-eye. We'll start fur Corn Island to-morrow."

"Wal, keep your eye peeled fur the Detroit Rangers!" called out a man in the crowd.

"Yes. Simon Girty'd like a crack at two good scouts!" added another.

The Detroit Rangers was the name by which a company of red men, interspersed with white renegades and led by Simon Girty, was fast becoming known throughout the country for their needless cruelty to white settlers. They ranged the frontier, killing innocent women and children and burning the cabins of those who sided with the American cause.

"We'll take good care o' red skunks, an' white, too," retorted Simon Kenton, and departed with Haggin to make plans for their journey to Corn Island, where Colonel Clark was gathering his army.

Corn Island was thickly wooded, and situated at the falls of the Ohio. The current of the river was swift; hence the island was an isolated spot and its situation was of assistance to Colonel Clark in preventing his men from deserting. Many of those who answered his appeal for troops became frightened when they learned that his real purpose was to capture the British strongholds on the Mississippi, and promptly fled homeward through the woods, with the result

that by the time Kenton and Haggin arrived at the camp, the army consisted of about one hundred and fifty men.

Colonel Clark was glad to see his friend and greeted him heartily.

"And how many have you brought with you?" he inquired, when he had declared himself delighted at Simon's loyalty. "Are you scouting for a large party?"

Simon flushed beneath the bronze of his cheeks.

"John an' me air alone," he returned. "The rest thought it would be dangerous to leave the fort."

It was Colonel Clark's turn to flush.

"Afraid of their own hides, that's what's the matter with them," he growled. "The fort won't be much better off for their defense, if trouble comes."

The two newcomers were sympathetic.

"We heard from a couple of hunters that Captain Montgomery, from Harrodsburg, was making salt at Drenning's Lick," said Haggin. "He's full of fight, and he's got ten men with him."

"Go get him," commanded Clark.

After a night's rest, therefore, Simon and John set off for Drenning's Lick and put the matter before Captain Montgomery.

"Clark's mighty disappointed," they told him.

"Can't get nothin' but a handful o' men to fight with him."

"I'm ready!" returned Montgomery, without hesitation. "What do you say, lads?" turning to the little group he had with him.

"Rub out the red varmints!" promptly returned one of the salt-makers.

"Thet's the stuff—rub 'em out!" cried the others, beginning to hide the salt kettles. When that was done, they were ready to start.

"Glad to see there's some fighting blood left," said Colonel Clark when the little band appeared. "I was beginning to think it had all been spilled."

A lean-to of brush, shared with several other men, formed what Simon considered a substantial shelter for him and for John Haggin during their stay on the island. It was a good place for Clark's undertaking, for besides gathering his little army together it was necessary to drill and train the men. Colonel Clark himself had had but little military experience, but he made up for lack of skill with an inborn ability to command, and it was not long before he had his forces under splendid control. Meanwhile, he had built a blockhouse to protect the families of some of the men, who had followed them to this spot, and meant to make their homes there until the expedition returned. About twenty families were encamped around this little fort, and, altogether,

there were about four hundred men, women and children on Corn Island.

Simon Kenton and John Haggin, with a record of scouting behind them, were chosen to lead the main body of troops down the river. A dugout was put at their disposal, and furnished with ammunition, three loaves of corn bread, a few potatoes and some salt and pepper. Each man had a rifle, a knife and a hatchet, and each carried a little dried venison in a pouch. By the 24th of June, all was in readiness, and the little fleet fretted at its moorings in the lee of the island. Four large flat-boats carried the four companies that made up Clark's command. Simon's dugout was fastened to the foremost of the boats, in preparation for a departure in advance of the rest.

"Well, lads, here's hoping I don't see you again till we are all at Fort Massac," said Colonel Clark, on the flat-boat, looking down at Simon and John, who were busily disposing their belongings in the dug-out.

Fort Massac was an abandoned French post at the mouth of the Tennessee River, which had been agreed upon as a meeting-place between the scouts and the army. From that point the troops were to march overland, against the British post of Kaskaskia. For Colonel Clark to see

212 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

his scouts again before they reached the meeting-place, would mean that they had discovered hidden dangers and returned to report them.

"An' here's hoping John an' I see what's to be seen," returned Simon, cheerfully.

"We'll need more light than this," said John, ruefully regarding the sky, from which the sun had disappeared, due to an eclipse. The men in the flat-boats were muttering among themselves, for they believed the eclipse to be a bad omen. Their forebodings, however, had no effect on Colonel Clark or his scouts, and not a change was made in the plans for departure. In a darkness that was almost deep as night, Simon and John pushed off, paddling back up the river, to reach the channel through the rapids.

"Wal, here goes, John, hold yore hat!" cried Simon, as the dugout was swept into the swift current. The advice was unnecessary. John's hat, like Simon's, was a coonskin cap from which the fur had been shaved, and fitted his head as closely as anything could fit. Spray flew high above their heads and dashed into their faces, as Simon spoke, and his last word ended in a gasp. The heavy craft was whirled down the mighty river as if it had been a leaf. Simon, in the prow, plied his paddle furiously to keep the boat right-side up; his yellow hair blew out straight behind

him and his eyes gleamed with delight as he narrowly contrived to keep from being upset.

"Wish we had time to do it agin!" he cried, when they were in calmer waters.

"Shucks!" said John. "That's only play fur younkers."

CHAPTER XXI

AN ENCOUNTER WITH A RED GIANT

THE first day's journey was uneventful. The high forest walls on either side of the river marched silently by the watchful gaze of Simon and John, paddling steadily down the middle of the stream, where a bullet would be unlikely to reach them, but where they would undoubtedly draw the fire of any foes who lurked along the banks. Early on the morning of the second day Simon saw a puff of smoke suddenly dart out from the heavy foliage on the left side. The report of a gun was followed by the spat of lead on the water, close to the boat. Simon raised his rifle and fired at the fleck of blue smoke before it had begun to rise. John had been none the less swift to act; even as Simon fired he was swerving sharply toward the opposite shore, and then, bending low, began to paddle with all his strength. Without a word, Simon dropped his gun and picked up his own paddle once more.

"They're not aimin' to waste lead," remarked John, after a mile of hard paddling, with no

further attempt at shooting on the part of the unseen foe.

"Fust crick we see, we'll hide," returned Simon. "We've got to find out how many o' the red varmints air round hereabouts, an' I ain't hankerin' to walk any further than I hev to."

At the next bend in the river they drew swiftly across the stream to the side from which the attack had come, and soon discovered a tiny creek, heavily overhung with foliage. Into this natural cove they forced their canoe, and made it snug in a spot where it was entirely concealed from view on all sides.

"You wait here, John," whispered Simon. "One of us has got to be left to go back with the news, in case there's a big war-party on our trail."

"Who're you talkin' to?" said John, sharply. "Me sit idle while you go a-scoutin' fur Ingens? Not while my name's John Haggin."

"It's dangerous," returned Simon. "One of us had ought to stay. But I ain't trustin' anybody to look fur signs when I'm right here!"

"We can travel a ways apart. 'Tain't likely we'd both be potted to once." John was making fast the canoe in its hiding place, preparatory to a rapid departure. Without any further words, Simon made off through the bushes.

He followed the river as closely as possible,

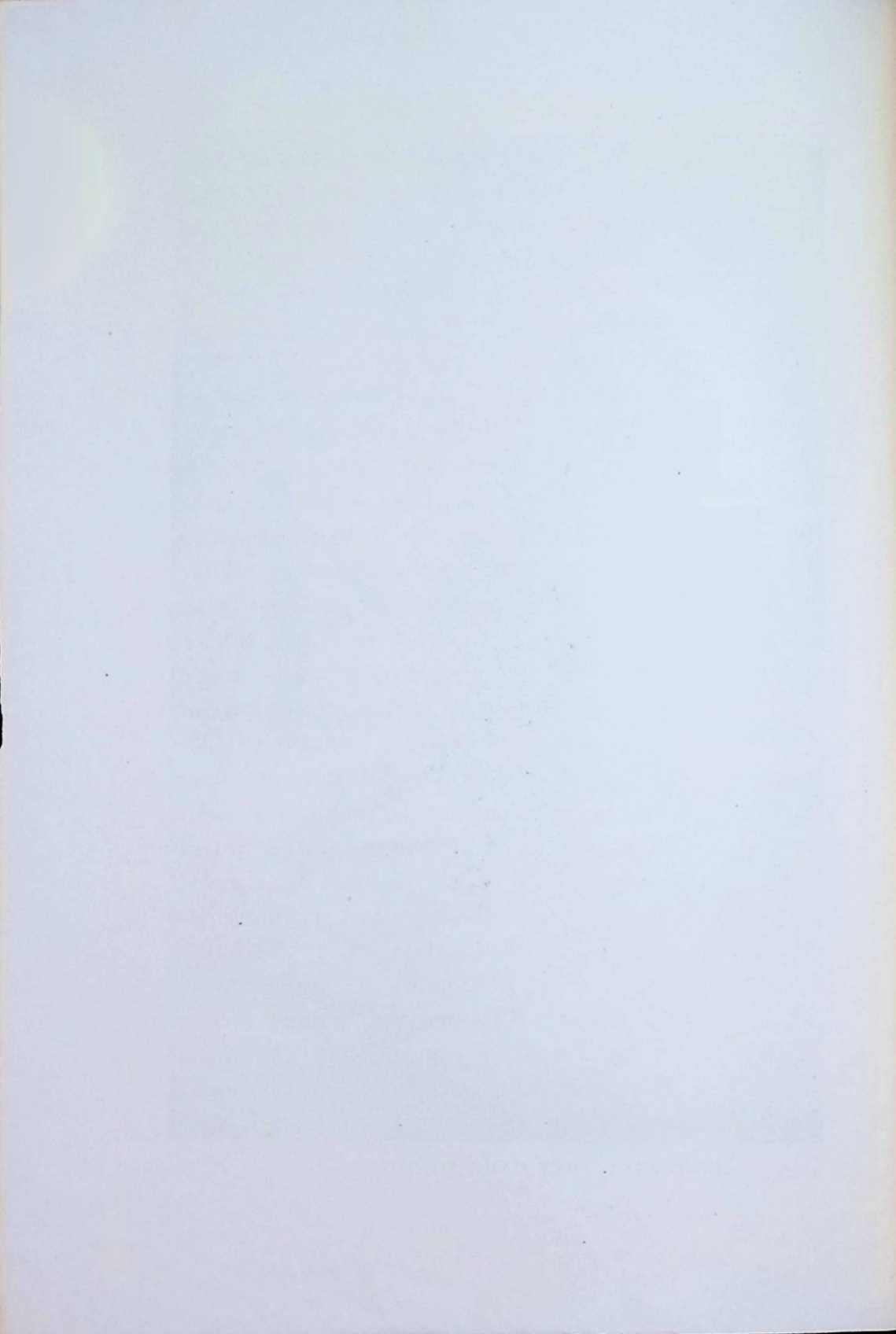
216 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

believing that the Indians, if stalking the canoe, would be hurrying toward him along the wooded bluffs. But he had almost reached the spot from which he was sure the disturbing shot had come, before he found a single trace of the foe. Then he discovered a small branch of a young tree, which had been broken, and was hanging limply from the parent bough. As he started forward to examine the locality more closely he heard a faint sliding sound, as if a foot had slid forward; wheeling, he caught the glint of a rifle barrel. Instantly he was behind a tree, in time to see the brown figure that leaned forward ever so slightly, to sight before the shot. But Simon's rifle spoke first—and missed. The wily redman, noting Simon's disappearance in the merest fraction of a glance, had straightened, even as he bent forward, and the bullet from Simon's gun chipped the bark from the side of the tree.

With an exultant yell the Indian leaped out from cover, knowing that he could, by his swiftness, prevent Simon from reloading. He dashed toward the tree that hid the white man—that had hidden him—for Simon was off at the moment of realizing that his lead had been wasted. Unfortunately he found himself between his enemy and the river, and he had no choice but to run straight toward the edge of the bluff. It was twenty feet to the strip of sand that lay below—



INSTANTLY THEY CAME TO DEATH GRIPS



not a big jump for a young man who had had the Kentucky wilderness for a training ground. Without turning his head, he leaped. In mid-air, there was just a moment in which he caught the report of a rifle, followed swiftly by a second shot, and the thought flashed before him that John Haggin had come up just in time. The idea had scarcely time to form, for he landed at that moment, feet foremost—on an Indian's chest! As the savage sprang upward with a grunt of rage, Simon's startled senses took in the fact that he had fallen upon a giant—also that another Indian was only a few feet away, leveling his rifle. The big savage's gun had been knocked from his hand as he went down under Simon's unexpected weight, but he was more than a match for any fighter with his bare hands, as Simon was soon to discover. Instantly they came to death grips just as a bullet whizzed close by his head from the standing Indian's rifle. As they came together the giant's arms closed round his body. Never had Simon felt such a grip! It was a slow, gradual embrace, but as unescapable as the hold of a boa constrictor. He felt the breath leaving his body, but instinct warned him to look around. The shorter Indian, a leer on his face, was whirling a tomahawk above his head. With a superhuman effort Simon kicked backward, catching the second Indian, over-

confident of his victim, in the pit of the stomach and tossing him into the stream. It was deep, and the current was rapid at this point, swirling about a group of rocks that were upflung near the shore; the redman struck head-first on one of these, and disappeared beneath the dark water.

Simon, of course, had no opportunity of observing the result of his instinctive kick; he was engaged in trying to make some use of his hands before the red giant's arms should crush the life from his body. The monster dared not shift his hold, lest his victim should take advantage of a slight loosening of his grasp; consequently, when Simon began painfully to work his hands up towards the giant's throat, the latter merely tightened his own arms; but it was not enough. Simon's long, strong fingers continued to move upward, another second and they were burrowing into the red throat, striving for the windpipe.

The red-bronze of the giant's face was slowly purpling, and Simon, putting his last ounce of strength into the fingers that were shutting off his adversary's breath, saw it dimly, through a red mist that clouded his sight. But for the pain in his lungs, he felt that he must lose consciousness. Suddenly the Indian's grip relaxed, and with the fury of a wounded animal, the great creature tore his maddening adversary from his throat and, leaping to his feet, caught up the

white man and hurled him over his head. Simon, half dazed, struck on a heap of soft sand, and regained his footing almost as soon as he fell. His eye fell upon the rifle which the shorter Indian had thrown away and he snatched it up. But the giant had found a weapon, too; Simon's rifle lay at his feet, and he seized it, aiming at his foe. There had been no time for Simon to reload since he had fired at the Indian on the bluff above, and the giant, realizing his mistake, began loading hastily, aware that Simon had already begun the process. He pushed the ramrod too roughly in his eagerness, however, and it flew out of his hand and into the water. It took a second to retrieve it, and in that second Simon's task was completed; he raised his rifle and sent a ball into the Indian's heart just as he lifted his head triumphantly.

Simon, wiping the perspiration from his face with the leather sleeve of his hunting-shirt, sat down on a rock to regain his breath and steady his nerves. It was here that John, peering cautiously over the edge of the bluff, found him a few minutes later, and, having signaled, he proceeded to climb nimbly down the face of the precipice. He dropped down beside Simon with a sigh of relief.

"Had a tough job with that Ingen o' yours,"

220 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

he began, when his eye fell upon the huge figure lying several feet away.

"Hi!" he exclaimed. "Had a set-to with another—an' a reg'lar bufflo of a feller, too." He ran to have a closer look at the dead giant.

"Thet's not the only one," remarked Simon, calmly. "Hed another thet I wuz 'bliged to kick into the river. It's a wonder you didn't come an' give me a little assistance."

"Assistance!" John was righteously indignant. "Didn't I chase thet fust Ingen o' yourn all o' two miles afore I got him?"

"Was he alone?"

"Yes, I reckon he was. Leastways, he was except for these two down here."

Simon chuckled. "Reckon these two wuz a mite surprised when I came a-flyin' through the air. They were with the Ingen that hustled me over the cliff, an' when they heard me shoot, they were all primed to climb up an' give their partner a hand. But I wuz too quick for 'em; no sooner hed they pricked up their ears than I wuz on my way down; an' I hit the big one full in the chest!"

"I reckon he wuz the reddest Ingen you ever see then!"

"No; he was glad to see me. Put his arms around me and gave me a great big hug!" Between bursts of laughter Simon recounted the

story of those lively minutes which had followed his leap from the bluff, and John, who had had nothing more exciting than a two-mile run after a fleeing redman, who, nevertheless, found opportunity to pause and aim now and then, from behind a tree, listened admiringly to Simon's brief tale.

After bathing their faces in the cool river and eating some of their jerked venison to restore their strength, the two scoured the neighborhood thoroughly, but becoming convinced that they had dispatched all of the foe lurking in the vicinity, they finally returned to their canoe and paddled off down the river.

CHAPTER XXII

CLARK'S TRIUMPH

THE swing down the river ended early on the following day, without anything more to mar the beauty of the June landscape; but for all that Simon and John stepped out of the canoe with relief, for the long journey in the narrow dugout which allowed of no movement had cramped their active muscles. The old fort which guarded the mouth of the Tennessee River stood grimly before them, desolate even in the brightness of the warm day. The palisade was still standing, but showed huge gaps where the decaying logs had fallen from their places. Inside, the few huts had been half destroyed by the Indians, long before—probably during the French and Indian War; yet one was easily found that would give the travelers all the shelter they needed for the night.

“What do you say to a juicy gobbler fur dinner?” Simon inquired of his companion, when they had transferred their few belongings to the cabin of their choice.

“Ingens might hear our gun.”

“Ef thar are Ingens in the neighborhood, we

might ez well know it now, afore the whole army gits here," returned Simon sensibly, and John, whose appetite was keen, was not loth to be convinced. They shot a couple of plump turkeys with very little effort, and roasted them in the fireplace of their little cabin. The birds were sizzling merrily above the hot fire, and John was poking the potatoes, laid in the ashes, to see if they were done, when Simon, at the cabin door, uttered a low exclamation.

"Ingens?" inquired John, springing to his feet, rifle in hand.

"Whites."

"British spies!"

"No." Simon had not taken his eyes off the advancing men, from the first moment they appeared. "They are carryin' meat; reckon they're hunters."

"Or they want us to think they are."

The four men who had emerged from the forest came swiftly across the clearing, and walked boldly within the stockade. They at once caught sight of the two figures standing in the cabin doorway, and approached in a straightforward manner.

"John Lucas!" cried Haggin, when they were near enough to make out their features.

"Johnny Haggin!" returned one of the hunters, breaking into a smile. Turning to Simon,

Haggin explained that John Lucas was an old friend of his, whom he had not seen for several years. The four had lately been in Kaskaskia, and grinned cheerfully when they heard of Clark's expedition.

"He kin walk away with that town," they declared; "an' we'll be glad to help him do it, if he's willin'. Meanwhile we might as well have a taste o' this here game."

They threw their burdens on the ground, and whipping out their long knives, proceeded to cut choice morsels from the deer and buffalo meat they carried.

"The pertaters air scarce," said Simon, appointing himself host to the gathering. "But if everyone kin content himself with one an' a half, we kin make 'em do. An' while your stuff's a-cookin', I reckon thar's no objection to John an' me havin' our bite—these turkeys air plumb cooked an' we ain't had hot meat in a couple o' days."

On the following day the flat-boats came into view; they had swept down the broad river apparently unnoticed. Colonel Clark was full of triumph over the ease with which the first leg of the journey had been accomplished. He heard Simon's report of the encounter with the three Indians, dismissed them as scattered hunters without definitely hostile intentions, and ac-

cepted the four new recruits to his army with considerable enthusiasm.

"We've got a mite of a walk through the woods," he ruminated, when one of the men suggested that he could lead the army to the town they were seeking, "and every day we delay increases the danger of the garrison's being warned. We'll be mighty glad to have a guide who can get us there in the quickest possible time."

The flat-boats were taken down the river a few miles, where they could be sunk without much risk of discovery, and the little army, without equipment save for the pack that each man carried, without wagons or horses, was ready to start within the hour, once the boats were out of the way.

Simon Kenton, John Haggin, and fifteen others, including John Lucas, the hunter who was to act as guide, started off in advance of the main body, and kept at least two miles ahead, spread out in a skirmish line, in order to protect the oncoming troops from surprise. Nothing escaped the attention of these men; every footprint was examined; every least sign was taken into account.

On the third day John Lucas sought out Simon Kenton with a troubled face.

226 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

"Thar ought to be a Ingen trail through here! I expected to strike it several hours ago!"

Simon glanced at him sharply.

"Thought you-all knew the way? Clark'll be none too pleased—we hev'n't an hour to lose!"

"Get the rest to try to find it," begged Lucas. "I'm sure it's round here somewheres."

The news was communicated to the whole skirmishing party, and they sought diligently for the lost Indian trace for an hour; then they met again and reported their failure, one by one.

"Thar's nothin' fur it but to tell Clark! He's the leader—let him decide what to do," said Simon, and they all waited for the oncoming troops.

"He's a spy—he's misled us on purpose," whispered a man who heard the report to Colonel Clark.

"A spy! A spy!" The word ran like wildfire through the hot-headed ranks.

"Hangin's too good fur a spy!" The mutterings of the men rapidly became loud talk. Various suggestions were tossed into the seething, impatient crowd.

"Burn him at the stake—it's what they git the Ingens to do to the settlers! Burn the whole four of 'em—they're all spies together. Hair-buyer Harrison's spies!"

They were in a little valley, one of the numer-

ous tiny prairie spots that dotted the great wilderness. It was carpeted with lush grass, dotted with flowers and surrounded by a wall of trees. Colonel Clark, in the center, could easily command his men.

"Talk is cheap," he sneered. "The time has not yet come to decide this man's fate. It is possible, as he says, that he has merely lost his way; if that is so, he only needs a little more time to prove it. If he does not prove it, he can't get away; but—in that case, he's *my* meat!" The glittering blue eyes swept the assembly; the rigid figure, negligently grasping the long-barreled rifle, held the attention of every onlooker. Colonel Clark was twenty-five years old; his nerves were of steel; his aim was perfect, and his temper was of the hair-trigger variety. The mutterings ceased.

John Lucas, Simon and the rest of the skirmishing party were sent out again, while the others prepared to make use of the enforced delay by eating and resting. Simon, scouting alone, like the others, had gone straight ahead for several miles, when he noticed a faint line of smoke, curling above the tree-tops.

"A camp-fire! 'Watch out, Simon,'" he told himself, as he cautiously approached. Whoever it was had little fear of discovery, or he would not have lit a camp-fire in broad daylight in that

region, haunted with British spies and hostile Indians. With every forest art he knew, Simon crept closer and closer.

"It won't be a big war-band, or they'd have a bigger fire," he thought, "but it's jist ez fatal to git shot by one man ez a dozen."

To his delight, when he finally peered around a large tree, on the gentle slope above the spot where the little camp-fire burned, he saw a lone man, carefully tending a long stick which held a fat turkey in its forked end.

"Pity he's not asleep," thought Simon regretfully. "Well, I'll make the best of it." And rising noiselessly to his feet, he pulled off the ball of deer-thong which was attached to his shot-pouch, grasped his rifle firmly, stepped from behind the tree, and jumped. His nicely calculated leap landed him at the stranger's back. Before he could gain his feet, Simon, behind him, was whipping the deer-thong round his wrist, and jerked swiftly backward. The man's rifle he had kicked aside with one quick movement.

"Thar—thet'll keep you-all out o' harm's way fur one while," he said, turning his captive around.

"What's the matter with you?" spluttered the stranger.

"I know a spy when I see one," returned Simon, eying the browned turkey.

"I'm an honest settler from Kaskaskia," retorted the man, in a calmer tone, seeing that anger got him nothing. "I'm no spy; I'm an American."

"Tell that to Colonel Clark," murmured Simon, reaching for the turkey. "I'm hungry enough to eat it all," he admitted, "but I believe in fair play. I'll give you half—maybe you-all air tellin' the truth, though it's highly improbable."

The turkey disposed of, he compelled his captive to walk ahead of him on the return journey, and upon his arrival he found that John Lucas had discovered the lost trail, luckily for him, and that the army was ready to resume its march. The stranger's protestations of innocence were soon silenced, for he was recognized by several men who lived at posts near to Kaskaskia, and riot arose for the second time that day when these men told their companions that the captive had been active in urging on the Indians against the whites. Colonel Clark again boldly interfered, however, and with some grumbling the men finally permitted the stranger to be tied between two of the company and the march was resumed.

From the point on the Ohio where the flat-boats were sunk, to the little town of Kaskaskia was a hundred and twenty miles. But Clark's army, unencumbered as it was, made twenty miles a

day, and on the sixth day, therefore, in the afternoon of the fourth of July, they reached the east bank of the Kaskaskia River, opposite the town. In the heavy thickets the men lay undiscovered until night.

"Fust time I ever made war on a white town," said Simon Kenton, lying close to John Haggins, at a point which commanded a good view of the town.

"Makes me feel sort o' like an Ingen, lyin' in ambush an' watchin' innocent folks goin' round about their business."

"Innocent!" snorted John. "It's folks like them that keep our towns in danger. Don't they keep the Ingens supplied with powder an' stuff to fight us?"

"Thet's so," Simon admitted. "An' I reckon they'll be ready to pour a heap o' lead into us when they see us comin'."

The hours of waiting, long though they were, passed swiftly enough for men who believed that their advance on the armed town might cost their lives, and when the order came to move down the river, at nine o'clock, the little company arose, none too stout-heartedly, and made their way toward a lighted farmhouse on the same side of the river. When surrounded, it proved to be the home of a Pennsylvania farmer, who disliked the French occupants of Kaskaskia, and their

professed allegiance to the British even more, and expressed himself as willing to help in the capture of the town.

"It won't be hard if you once get the fort," he told Colonel Clark. "The town won't make any resistance then. There's only a small garrison of Creoles, though De Rocheblave has been asking continually for British troops. But I reckon the king thought he needed his troops more in the East." Monsieur De Rocheblave, a Frenchman, was the governor of the town, and many French settlers lived there.

"The fort keeps no sentinels," added the farmer, "and I know a place where the pickets are so rotten that they can be easily broken down. The British never thought to see the day that the Americans would attack this town!"

Luckily the farmer had a boat, and in this the little army crossed the river, silently and swiftly, and marched rapidly along the opposite shore to the town. So secure did the inhabitants feel that the big gate of the stockade was not even closed—were not the Indians their friends? Colonel Clark led his troops within, still without discovery, and sent them along the inside of the palisade, so as to surround the town. A small detachment, which included Simon Kenton and John Haggin, he led to the fort itself. With every step the men believed that the next instant

232 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

would hear the alarm ring out over the quiet town. To their strained ears the rattle of a pebble sounded like the report of a gun; but nearer and nearer they crept, and still no voice was raised in warning. The fort itself was protected by an inner stockade. The Pennsylvanian led Clark and his men to the rear, where the pickets were weak, as he had said. It was the work of a moment to wrench them from their places, and the handful of Americans slipped through. There they paused listening. The wail of a violin came softly to their ears and the sound of shuffling feet. Colonel Clark smiled grimly.

"It'll be a dance in the big room," whispered the guide, and pointed out a small door that lay before them.

"Come with me, Simon," commanded Clark, his hand on the door. "The rest of you remain here and guard our retreat—if there be one to guard," and he softly opened the door and stepped inside.

Guided by the strains of music, and followed closely by Simon, the daring young American made his way to the room where the officers of the fort and their wives were enjoying a dance. Motioning Simon to halt, Clark stepped boldly forward into the room. Simon, in the shadows outside, could see the swaying figures and smiling faces of the dancers, and hear the laughter

that floated upon the warm air. For a moment no one seemed to notice the stranger, standing tall and straight near the door. He folded his arms and surveyed the scene with cool amusement. He wore the blue and buff of the American Army, and his arrival did not go unnoticed long. A terrific war-whoop suddenly shattered the air, as an Indian in the assembly, sensing danger with the instinct of all wild things, turned and saw the foreboding figure in the doorway. The music stopped, broken off in the middle of a note. The people turned startled faces toward the intruder. Simon saw the color drain from the women's faces and the quick motion of the men toward their knives. And then Clark's clear voice rang out across the room, so still that the echo of his tones reverberated from the walls.

"On with the dance!" he cried. "But remember—you are dancing in honor of Virginia and the United States, instead of Great Britain!"

With those words, the capture of the fort was effected. Monsieur Rocheblave, the governor, came forward, and, certain that a large force outside was waiting to back up the colonel's brave words, surrendered his arms. Meanwhile the frontier army disposed about the town had attracted the attention of a citizen, and terror ran through the little settlement. Colonel Clark commanded Rocheblave to tell his people to

repair to their houses, and to leave them only on pain of death. Trembling and white-faced the men and women huddled within doors and did not venture out again that night, though it is doubtful if they spent the time in sleep. In the morning Colonel Clark graciously permitted a delegation to approach him, and with tears running down their faces the men knelt before him and begged him to spare their wives and children.

"Take us for slaves, Chief of the Big Knives," they implored. "We'll work for you, only do not kill our women and our little children."

"Who speaks of killing?" returned Clark indignantly. "I want no lives, no, nor property either. Americans do not need to use the methods of savages. We will soon have this whole country—General Burgoyne has been captured and France is coming to our aid!"

After this strategic announcement, he invited the townsmen to join the American cause and repudiate their British masters, which met with instant acceptance. The stars and stripes were hoisted above the fort, proudly floating for the first time near the Mississippi River.

"Well, Simon, that was a fine night's work!" declared Clark, a little later, as he was preparing a dispatch to be sent to Colonel Bowman, commander at Harrodsburg. Simon, too, was proud of the achievement and full of admiration

for the daring young colonel. He set out shortly after with the dispatch, accompanied by John Haggin, and they retraced their way through the forest, found their dugout, and reached Harrodsburg within thirteen days. They were greeted with joyful tidings:

"Daniel Boone is back!"

CHAPTER XXIII

CAPTURED

“**L**OOK carefully for Indian signs on the way, and bring me back a full report of the town’s condition; I want to know how many warriors are at home, and how soon the others are expected back from the fall hunt. You know, Simon,” added Colonel Bowman, in a burst of confidence, “I believe that the time has come to carry the war straight into the Indian towns. With such a stronghold as Chillicothe wiped out, I dare say the red scoundrels will be glad enough to keep away from the settlements for a while.”

Simon was receiving his last instructions before leaving Boonesborough with Andrew Montgomery, the young man who had been with him on the Clark expedition, and another younger fellow of the station, named George Clark (not the already famous George Rogers Clark). They had been ordered on scouting duty in the vicinity of a large Indian town, Chillicothe, on the Scioto River, across the Ohio, and in the heart of the redmen’s territory, against which

town it was Colonel Bowman's intention to lead an expedition when the time was favorable.

It was September, several weeks after Simon's return from the daring trip with Clark to Kaskaskia, and only a few days after a furious assault by the Indians on Boonesborough. Simon had missed taking part in the brave defense of the town, being absent on his rounds and far across the Ohio at that time. The siege had lasted for several days, and had cost the Indians many lives, since, having been warned by Daniel Boone, who escaped from captivity in time to warn his friends of the redmen's plans, the settlement had had time to prepare and strengthen its fortifications.

The three scouts accomplished their risky mission without detection; they crossed the Ohio and approached the Indian town cautiously, lying hidden in the woods close by for a whole day. From this point of observation they learned how many warriors had gone out to bring in venison; that the town was well supplied with corn, which they could see the squaws gathering in the fields, and that the Indians, from their careless behavior, had no suspicion that an attack upon them was contemplated. There were no guards, as the watchers found out before nightfall, and after dark they made bold to draw nearer, encircling the whole town in order to carry back

a detailed picture of its possibilities of defense. By accident they stumbled upon a pound where were several of the spirited half-wild horses which the Indians delighted in catching and breaking in for their use.

"We need some horses," whispered Simon to his companions. "Nothin' like a piece o' good horse-flesh fur gittin' over a rough trail."

"Right you are, Simon," returned Montgomery, with a laugh, as he stooped to unhobble a restless creature that shied away from him. A moment later they were each mounted on a horse of their own choice.

"Why not take 'em all?" asked Clark, eying the others greedily.

"Good fur you, George!" cried Simon, "here's a bunch of halters," and he swept them off a bough beside him, where they had been hung for the night.

"Critters don't seem anxious to change masters," grunted Montgomery, as the animals plunged and reared.

"Whoa thar! Whoa!" muttered Simon, but the low tone was unconvincing, and the horses snorted and kicked and attempted to evade the halters.

"Can't keep the Ingens from hearin', unless they're dead," he added. "Thar! we've done it now!" A shrill scream from behind him had

broken the peaceful silence of the village. "Here! You two ride ahead o' me and lead these—we've got four extras—take two apiece. I'll whip 'em up from behind."

Seizing the halters which Simon threw to them, his two companions dug their heels into the sides of their mounts, and dashed forward.

"Long Knives steal horses! Long Knives steal horses!"

Every inhabitant of the village, young and old, warriors, children, youths and maidens, old men and women and dogs streamed out into the cloud of dust that the flying hoofs of the horses kicked up as they whirled by, and a chorus of screams and cries and shouts, mingled with the barking of the dogs, crashed about their ears in deafening confusion. But only for a moment; the next the noise was dying away as the furious pace they had set carried the riders speedily out of earshot.

The woods were open, for the most part, in this section, free of undergrowth, and with the trees rather well apart, permitting swift riding, and varied by extensive plains, over which the horses could, and did, gallop at breakneck speed. Simon, close behind the other two riders, plied his whip vigorously whenever the four horses, which were being led, showed the least tendency to lag. In this manner the little cavalcade rode without

a pause till they were brought up against an impenetrable swamp; here they sought in vain for a place to cross, and finding none, hastily determined to skirt it and take a straight course to the Ohio. They rode all night without rest; at daybreak they halted for a few minutes to chew a mouthful or two of jerked venison and refresh themselves by dipping hands and faces in a brook. Then on again; on and on, throughout the day, with a similar pause at sunset; and, at a slower pace, on they went again, all night.

The hazy September dawn found them emerging from the forest gray as ghosts with the dust of the sun-dried plains, but with eyes bright with victory—before them rolled the river! Once across, they were practically safe; the Indians had had enough of marauding on the white men's territory for some time to come. But hope, kept alive through all the weary hours of relentless riding, wavered somewhat as they gazed on the majestic flood at their feet. The wind was high and the river waters were lashed into formidable waves.

"Not much chance o' swimmin' over with dry guns," declared Simon, as they reached the bank.

"No chance," returned Montgomery, shortly.

They glanced back along the trail over which they had just come; they inclined their heads, listening intently; only the shriek of the wind in

the forest and the muttering of the waters met their ears, and the woodlands stretched away behind them, innocent of pursuing dusky figures.

"Left 'em behind a considerable spell, I reckon," chuckled Simon, and the other two joined in his laughter over the rage of the horseless village.

"Nothin' fur it but to build a raft, boys," said Simon, when their merriment was over and they were wiping their eyes. "It'll keep our guns an' powder dry an' I kin swim across with the horses."

This plan was received joyfully, and while Montgomery and Clark began to gather washed-up logs and bits of wood to be lashed together with the deerskin thongs the scouts always carried, Simon, holding firmly the halters of six horses, and still mounted on his own, plunged boldly into the seething river.

"Whoa, boy! Easy thar!" Simon's efforts to calm his struggling charges were drowned as the roily waters, further disturbed by the wild efforts of the horses, dashed the breath from his body. For a moment he clung desperately to his seat, digging his knees into his mount's sides and hanging on to the halters that were wrapped about either hand. The next instant he was swept from the horse's back, and hampered as he was in swimming with his hands occupied in holding to the cutting leather ropes, he was immediately forced

below the group of horses, who stemmed the tide much more vigorously, and was obliged to let go of the halters. When the seven intelligent animals perceived that they were free, they turned with one accord and swam back to the shore that they had just left. There was nothing for Simon to do but follow, which he did, without giving the horses time to disperse. He stood for a moment on the shore to get his breath, then forced the animals once more into the flood. The same thing happened. Again and again Simon tried to swim across, but he never got any further than the middle of the river before his hold was broken and the escaped horses swam back to shore.

"Bust my buckskins!" cried Simon, his ordinary good-nature giving way to exasperation. "Ef the varmints would only swim t'other way!"

But swim across the river they would not, and finally, exhausted and beaten, Simon sank upon the shore, tossing the halters to his companions.

"Tie 'em up," said he, "I couldn't swim myself now, even ef they would go fur me. Thar's no use tryin', the critters air scared o' the rough water an' nothin' will git 'em across while this wind lasts."

"We kin leave 'em and take to the raft." Andrew pointed to the finished craft, rough but serviceable, upon which the guns and ammunition had already been loaded.

"Leave 'em!" snorted Simon. "After all our trouble o' gittin' 'em! We'll stick by 'em an' take the fortune Heaven sends us."

The others had not been really disposed to abandon their fine capture so easily, and they readily found reasons for agreeing with Simon's point of view.

"The wind'll be sure to die down at sunset," offered George, "an' the water will be calm enough then. Horses don't mind swimmin' when the water's still."

"But the Ingens'll be on us before then." The voice of prudence continued to speak through Andrew.

"Let 'em come," returned Simon. "Can't we hide the horses and ourselves too?"

That settled the argument. In a neighboring ravine they found a splendid hiding place for the horses, and in the adjacent wood they concealed themselves and their new raft. Snug among the bushes, they lay all day, eating heartily of their corn bread and dried meat and taking turns at sleeping. At sunset, with great caution, they approached the river again, only to find the waves higher than ever.

"It's too rough for the raft, now," said Andrew, resigned. The others agreed.

"We hev to stay with our horses—Fate has settled it fur us," said Simon cheerfully.

"But don't you think we ought to go up or down the river, so they won't find us so easy if they're on our trail?" said Andrew.

"You-all air an oneasy mortal," replied Simon. "What's the use o' goin' up or down the river? Can't they foller our trail jist as easy along the bank as they did through the woods? Even supposin' they've follered us this far."

"That's right," said George. "No use makin' extry trouble for ourselves. Let's go back an' wait till morning."

Simon had the last watch that night, and just before dawn he was delighted to note that the screaming of the wind in the tree-tops was growing fainter—was silenced, except for occasional gusts that shook the branches with ever lessening fury, and by daybreak had altogether died.

"Git up, lazybones!" He prodded his companions with the toe of his moccasin.

Andrew, wakened thus unceremoniously, whipped out his knife as he sprang to his feet.

"Thought the Ingens were on us," he said, grinning sheepishly as he recognized the cause of his alarm.

"No, they ain't, but they would be ef I let you-all sleep as long as you want!" retorted Simon. "The wind's down an' it's time we wuz makin' a start fur home."

Pausing only long enough to swallow a few

mouthfuls of food, the three started off, carrying their raft, and reached the river bank, to find the waters calm and smooth and inviting. But the horses refused the invitation they extended; only too well their slow minds remembered the experience of the day before, and though all three men urged, pulled, whipped and coaxed, the plunging horses refused to go near the river. After an hour of laborious effort the three gave it up; there was no doubt about it—the half-wild horses would not swim the Ohio!

"We'll hev to take a horse apiece an' ride down to the Falls," admitted Simon mournfully. "Colonel Clark left a bunch o' men down thar when he went off on his expedition, an' I reckon thar's quite a little settlement. We'll be safe thar, an' when these pesky critters forgit their scare, we kin make 'em take us across the river."

"I hate to do it," sighed George, letting go the halters he held, one by one. The released horses kicked up their heels and made for the woods, as the scouts sadly picked up their rifles and mounted the steeds they had chosen.

"I won't do it!" said Simon, suddenly, as they turned their horses down the river. "I won't let all thet beautiful horseflesh go! We need them horses! I'm a-goin to git 'em!"

"We'll take 'em all to the Falls!" George had

been as deeply pained as Simon at seeing the magnificent animals scattering into the forest.

"Well, be quick about roundin' 'em up!" grumbled Andrew. "Here, George, spread out there, no use goin' after 'em in a bunch!"

Riding two hundred yards apart, the three scouts, with Simon in the middle, hurried after their late captives, their minds too full of horseflesh to give a thought to pursuing Indians. Simon had not gone a hundred yards when he heard a whoop, that seemed to come from the direction of the spot where they had been trying to force the horses into the water. He slipped from his horse, hobbled it, and crept back, stealthily as a cat. The underbrush was thick at this point, and before he was aware of it, Simon was so close to four Indians on horseback, that although unperceived by the enemy, he knew that his next movement, even though it were one of retreat, would instantly betray him.

"When in doubt, shoot," said Simon to himself, springing suddenly to his feet and taking deliberate aim at the foremost Indian. The gun flashed in the pan; unknown to the scouts a wave must have swept the raft while the guns were lying on it the day before. Consternation lent wings to Simon's heels and he fled, steering for a wide area where a bygone storm had ripped the trees from the ground and strewn them in

fantastic heaps that were almost impenetrable on horseback. He, afoot, sped through the tangled mass with the fleetness of a deer, and as he out-distanced his pursuers, and saw the open wood ahead of him, permitted himself a chuckle of triumph. But he laughed too soon. Round a corner of the wood, just as he entered, swept a bronze figure on horseback, hand extended and face writhing in what the savage apparently believed was a smile of greeting:

"Brother! Brother!" he called.

"Ef my gun'd fire, I'd brother you!" muttered Simon behind clenched teeth.

"I'll surrender if you promise me good treatment," he called aloud, standing his ground.

"Treat good—brother, yes!" returned the Indian, seizing Simon's extended hand with such violence, and such a sudden ferocity in his features, that the white man, realizing his betrayal, swung his gun in his left hand. But the weapon never came down on the Indian's skull, for from behind Simon's arms were pinioned tightly. Another redman had followed him closely through the fallen timber. Now the first savage leaped from his horse and shook the unlucky Simon till his teeth rattled, and three or four others riding up began to beat him with ramrods, meanwhile yelling violent abuse:

"Steal Indian hoss, hey! A tief! A hoss steal!

"A rascal!" they screamed, dancing around him in rage.

Simon, vainly endeavoring to protect his head with his arms, saw Andrew Montgomery appear from behind a tree, and raise his gun. But as Simon's own weapon had done, it flashed, and merely served to turn the attention of several Indians toward the other white man. As many as twenty, Simon hastily estimated, had now joined the party occupied in punishing him, and bitter regret swept over him for those lost hours in which they might have made good their escape.

Andrew had fled, closely pursued, and was lost to view. A few minutes elapsed, in which the cuffing and shouting went on about Simon's head; then, even above the uproar, he heard the ominous crack of two rifles—followed by the dread scalp-halloo. Simon felt a chill run through his veins, and he lifted heavy eyes toward the returning warriors. His dread was realized; one of them was shaking aloft a bloody scalp—he recognized Andrew's dark locks.

The rain of blows and screaming abuse continued, but Simon, his thoughts upon his unfortunate friend, was insensible to their fury. The savages finally paused long enough to make sure of their captive. Flinging him on the ground, they compelled him to lie on his back with outstretched arms. Across his chest they passed a

stout stick, fastening his extended wrists to either end with thongs of buffalo hide. Near his feet they drove stakes into the earth, and fastened his ankles firmly with more tightly-drawn cords; around his neck they passed a halter, which they fastened to a sapling, and finally they passed a rope beneath him, winding either end around each arm, lashing them close to the transverse stick which crossed his breast. He was literally unable to move hand, head or foot. In this position the unhappy captive lay all through the night, for the savages encamped right where they were; but their rage permitted neither them nor Simon to sleep. It appeared inexhaustible, for they never ceased to shout the now familiar "hoss tief!" at their victim all night long, nor were there many moments when at least one tireless horse owner was not lending emphasis to the epithet by kicks and cuffs.

CHAPTER XXIV

LASHED TO A WILD COLT

IN the group of horses which the irate redmen had by now recovered was one fine wild colt—entirely unbroken. With the arrival of dawn preparations for an immediate return to Chillicothe were begun, without any attempt at breakfast. The restive colt was led forward, and so furious were the animal's efforts to break away that it took several Indians to hold him. They performed this duty gladly enough, apparently, and the woods rang with their hideous laughter as a couple of the others stooped and loosened Simon's bonds. He rose stiffly with the rough assistance of his captors, who ordered him to mount the colt. This Simon was utterly unable to do; his powerless limbs refused to obey his own will, and the Indians seized him and threw him violently across the horse's back. While some held him upright, others fastened his feet and legs together under the horse, and lashed his arms behind his back. The whole crowd was convulsed with laughter as the work went on, and they yelped and screamed what they considered funny questions at the writhing victim:

"Want steal more hoss, hey? Steal plenty Indian hoss, hey? Want shoot Indian?"

Simon's silence marred their enjoyment not one jot. They proceeded to tie a rope around his neck, fastening one end of it around the colt's neck; the other end was tied to the horse's tail. Finally, to make sure that the captive would not mercifully fall from the animal's back, they lashed a rope around his thighs and round the body of the horse. The work was complete, with a yell of exultation they turned the colt loose with a sudden lash, and the furious animal dashed into the woods. Whooping joyously, the whole party sprang upon horseback and fell into line, along a wide buffalo trace that led northward from the river. Simon's horse raced madly among the trees, choosing, it seemed to the unfortunate rider, the regions where the undergrowth was thickest and most heavily entwined with brambles. The low hanging branches of trees struck his face and head; the briers tore his skin, and the crazy plunges of the colt, which would have thrown him far if he had not been tied, made his head whirl. He struggled fiercely to tear his hands loose, but the stout buffalo thongs resisted his wild efforts; he swayed far to one side as the horse executed a sharp curve through the air, and his cheek was ripped open by an unusually thick, sharp thorn. If he could only get his

hands free, to protect his face! Blood trickling from a dozen scratches and cuts half blinded him, and all but shut out the sight of the yelling Indians, keeping him in sight, as they rode in high amusement along their smooth way.

But even a colt knows when he is beaten; finding that his rider could not be dislodged, the spirited animal suddenly gave up the attempt and trotted meekly over to the others, falling in line peaceably behind the cavalcade.

"The critter's got more heart than them red skunks," thought Simon, his heart full of gratitude at this unexpected respite. It was none too comfortable riding lashed and bound as he was, and boughs that met across his path often slapped his face, but his mount's pace was steady, though swift, and Simon inwardly asked for nothing better than to continue the ride forever. He knew what lay ahead—the black hate in his captors' eyes told him that!

They rode all day and at nightfall paused and removed Simon from his horse, confining him as they had the night before. One of the warriors had managed to shoot a fawn on the way, and this the whole company sat and devoured, without cooking, tearing off huge pieces and stuffing their mouths greedily. They offered Simon nothing, and he, sick and exhausted, scarcely felt the need of food. Next day they took up their jour-

ney again, but before they started they gave Simon a few pieces of dried strip venison. A captive dead of starvation cannot be tortured for the amusement of onlookers! Moreover, he was permitted to ride without being bound—the colt was tame enough now, and the point of that escapade was lost! His guards made up whatever discomforts he lacked by occasional kicks and cuffs, when they thought of it. One huge Indian cut a switch and rode behind Simon, for mile after mile, playfully cutting him across the shoulders, until he tired of the sport.

On the third day the party was within a mile of the village of Chillicothe, as Simon, who so lately had visited the place, well knew by various landmarks. Here they halted, while a messenger was dispatched to the town with the glad tidings—the horse “tief” had been captured! Black Fish, the Shawnee chief, rode majestically out from the town. He wore a magnificent head-dress of eagle feathers and his garments of soft deer skin were richly embellished with many colored beads; he made a commanding figure, as he dismounted and approached the unhappy captive. Folding his arms, and regarding the prisoner with beady, unwavering black eyes, the chief, who spoke English perfectly, asked, in the sing-song tone which the Indians used when speaking a language not their own:

"You have been stealing horses?"

"Yes, sir," said poor Simon.

"Did Daniel Boone tell you to steal our horses?" (Boone's was a name held in respect by all the Indians of the Ohio valley.)

"No, sir," replied Simon. "I did it of my own accord."

This bare-faced admission was too much for the chief's patience; he seized a hickory switch from the hands of a nearby Indian and laid it across Simon's shoulders with all his force until he was breathless. Then he tossed the weapon aside, remounted and turned back to the village.

With that, the whole party started on once more, with Simon in their midst; but he was not permitted to ride and had to walk the rest of the way, while the Indians, spurred on by the displeasure of the chief, renewed their cuffings and scoldings. Just outside of the village they were met by the entire population of the town, a hooting mob of braves and boys, squaws, old men and dogs. Even the children raced after their parents, their shrill yells mingling with the whoops and loud abuse of the elders. Simon, his ears ringing with the noise, made out a peculiar phrase that recurred again and again; he knew that they were calling for something, but he did not know what it was until he saw a couple of young men run toward the woods. They re-

turned with a small pine, from which willing brown hands hastily stripped the branches and the bark.

"Death at the stake!" Simon's hope, pale though it had been, flickered out at sight of the ominous pole. It was quickly planted in the ground and Simon, his heart sinking with every step, was dragged forward. Lifting his bound hands above his head, the redmen tied them to the stake. Round his neck they passed another rope, pulling it tightly and fastening it also to the post. In the meanwhile several of the others had been busy with dry boughs and bits of brush that they had gathered in the woods, and soon they had three piles of it, set at intervals about five feet from the post.

Now began a merry dance for the redmen. Simon, his eyes closed to avoid the cutting whips that they wielded, wondered that they could so enjoy the misery of an unfortunate man, even though that man was of another race. Their sudden anger at the discovery that their horses were stolen he could understand; the kicks and blows that followed his capture he felt they were justified in meting out to him; but surely their rage at the loss of a few horses (horses which they had recaptured since), could not still be at white heat! No, they were torturing him merely for torture's sake, he felt.

The sense of heat made him open his eyes momentarily; the piles of brush were beginning to blaze freely; Simon shrank against the pole and closed his eyes once more. The Indians shouted at this sign of fear, and several picked up bits of burning wood and ran to brandish them in the captive's face. But Simon had not been frightened; he had passed the point at which he could feel terror, and his wincing had been involuntary. He now opened his eyes and stared coldly into the malignant orbs that peered at him, and stood tense and unquivering beneath their blows. Round and round, outside the blazing circle, the Indians danced, yelling hideously, chanting at times, and now and then breaking the circle to leap the flames and beat the victim furiously with their fists. Simon had one thought: "Why can't they be quick?" He had never feared death itself—but how slow it was in coming!

The night came on, and still the dancing and screaming and whipping went on. Slowly the tortured hours dragged by; looking up into the calm face of the moon Simon knew that it was nearly midnight. Would the end come before dawn? Then, suddenly, a strange thing happened; the dancing ceased; the dying fires were not replenished and the savages rushed forward, cutting Simon's bonds, so that he fell forward, stiff as though life had really left him. But he

had not been maimed in any way, and all his hurts were surface wounds; the Indians roughly pulled him to his feet and began pushing and dragging him toward the town. In a few minutes the blood began to circulate in his feet and the captive moved of his own volition—painfully enough. The rude huts and wigwams of the village looked peaceful and pleasant, silvered in the moonlight and wrapped round with the pleasant September air. Simon was led to one of the wigwams, where, with his arms bound behind him, he was permitted to lie down, between two guards, who fastened the ends of the same deer-thong that bound Simon's arms to their own hands, so that any movement on the captive's part, while they slept, would be instantly detected. But Simon knew that he had no chance of escape, and his whole body cried out for sleep. He closed his eyes, and in his exhaustion was asleep almost as soon as his head touched the hard ground.

CHAPTER XXV

THE GAUNTLET

AS soon as it was light, Simon was awakened from his heavy sleep by the two guards who had been left with him, who pulled roughly on the thongs that bound him to them. When they saw him open his eyes, they cut the rope and freed his hands, at the same time ordering him to do something, but as they spoke Shawnese, which Simon did not understand, he stood helplessly staring at them, till they made him understand that he was to go outside.

Everybody seemed to be astir in the village, Simon observed as he stood blinking in the early sunlight; between two and three hundred Indians were going about some momentous preparations, and all were laughing and talking.

"Up to more mischief," thought Simon dolefully, and the hoots and yells that greeted his appearance confirmed his fear that he himself was to provide further enjoyment. A yelling mob ran to meet him, and tore off the few tattered rags that were the remnants of his clothing; one ugly old hag reached up to scratch his face, already so lacerated as to be almost unrecogniz-

able, but she was pulled back by one of the braves, who scowled fiercely at Simon, to show that his motive was not one of mercy.

Seizing Simon's arm, this brave started him toward the outskirts of the town, all the inhabitants preceding or following, in a long straggling line. Past the huts that had seemed so peaceful the night before they went, and in front of one house, that from its ornamentation and size Simon knew to be the home of a chief, he saw the long brown hair of Andrew Montgomery, stretched on a hoop and drying in the air. He turned his eyes from the sight and hurried by.

At about a quarter of a mile from the village the Indians began to form into two long lines, with a lane between, their faces alight with happy anticipation. In their hands they brandished tomahawks, knives, hoe handles and switches, whatever weapon came easily; even the women and children were armed and in line. The sweat poured down Simon's face and started from every pore of his body at the sight; he looked off toward the village, to the Council House, with a small painted post at its door—safety lay that way! He knew the Indians' customs—the victim who could run through their lines and reach the Council House would be protected from further punishment until the chiefs and warriors, in solemn congregation, should decide upon his fate.

260 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

A few paces away from the door of the Council House he could see the end of the line; there at the foot stood an Indian with a drum. Simon's eyes traveled back along the bristling lane to the starting, where were two grim-looking warriors brandishing huge knives. As he looked the drum was struck; Simon bounded forward.

But not through the waiting lane! Swift as a hare he sped toward it, then turned sharply to the east and ran furiously with long, leaping steps that carried him speedily away from the two long lines. A burst of rage, torn from a hundred throats, rose and rent the air behind him, and the whole mob scattered this way and that, in wild pursuit, bent on his recapture. But Simon had the cunning and swiftness of a cornered animal. He doubled repeatedly on his tracks; the Indians in their baffled fury got in each others' way. The forest was out of the question; some of the crafty redmen headed him off in that direction at the very start, and Simon promptly concentrated his efforts on reaching the Council House. He ran first east, then west, but always a little forward, dodging blows, and so confusing were his motions that not a single knife, not one tomahawk, touched him.

The mass of his pursuers were struggling together, their hatchets and knives gleaming, now and then, above their heads; Simon had darted

through their lines, just as they were closing in on him, and in a final burst of speed was within a few yards of the Council House when he was met by an Indian sauntering leisurely in the direction of the uproar, wrapped in a blanket. He had taken no part as yet in the excitement, and being fresh, he threw off his blanket and barred Simon's way. The white man was exhausted; the Indian caught him and threw him down, and two others, racing up, began to rain blows upon the unhappy captive. Now the infuriated mob, seeing that the fleet prisoner had been caught, set up a howl of delight and swept forward. Simon's blood, fired by the knowledge that he was so near to safety, suddenly brought his tired limbs to life. The three captors, busily engaged in beating his huddled form, lying weak and collapsed, were unprepared for any new attempt on Simon's part. He leaped upward and on, his astonished assailants standing motionless, with uplifted weapons. In a few bounds the white man reached the door of the Council House, and with one arm round the post, sank, breathless, to the ground.

The Indians' triumphant shout turned to loud howls of disappointment. The whole crowd swept up to the door of the lodge, but dared not touch the prisoner. There was no guard put upon their tongues, however, and the squaws jabbered and shrieked, pointing their fingers at him

262 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

and pouring out a stream of abuse, to which Simon, who did not understand a word of what they said, was entirely indifferent.

Presently one of the braves, who had been talking in low tones with a group at one side, came forward, pushing the women aside, and followed by all the warriors and chiefs. Simon was pulled to his feet and pushed inside the door of the Council House, and, far in a corner, his hands were bound behind him and he was thrown upon the ground.

The Council House was fifty yards long, twenty-five yards wide and sixteen feet high—a large building for an Indian village. It was made of split poles, covered with bark, and had an opening in the center of the roof, which admitted light. Simon, through sick eyes, watched the warriors assemble, keeping a rough count. There were nearly a hundred, he estimated, arranging themselves in a circle, the older men in front, the less experienced warriors behind them. An old chief finally arrived and was placed in the middle of the circle; in one hand he carried a war-club, in the other, a piece of wood. As soon as this person arrived the entire assembly sat down, with the exception of a fierce young warrior, who continued standing, and began to speak. The address continued for a long time, and though Simon could not understand what was said, it

was plain enough that he was under discussion, for the assembled warriors kept casting upon him such fierce looks that there was no room for doubt. Several other warriors arose in turn and spoke at length; Simon believed that some of them were pleading for mercy, from their tone, but these orators were heard coolly. The more violent speakers, on the other hand, who were evidently urging his destruction, were received with grunts of approval.

Finally the warriors ceased speaking, and the old chief, in the center, arose in silence, and handed the war-club to the brave who sat next the door. The vote was about to be taken! Simon glanced around the circle of swarthy faces, and his heart sank at what he read there. He looked quickly back to the man that held the war-club, and saw him deliberately strike it against the ground, with violence. The old chief, watching keenly, made a mark on one side of his stick with his knife. In complete silence the club was passed from hand to hand; again and again the club was struck upon the ground, and the chief marked his stick. Occasionally a warrior passed the club to his neighbor without striking the ground, and then the chief turned his stick and made a mark upon the other side; but these marks were pitifully few. Simon knew that the sentence of death had been passed upon him, even

before the end of the count came, and with it a burst of joyful shouts from the assembly.

"The varmint kin burn me, but they won't git a squeal out o' me!" thought the prisoner, presenting a calm countenance to the mocking gaze of his captors. Presently a new discussion arose, and Simon guessed from their gestures that they were debating whether to burn him at once or to parade him through other towns before the final execution. The speaking went on for a long while, and then another vote was taken. The warriors rose to their feet, preparing to depart, and a young Indian approached Simon to lead him away.

"Where are we going?" ventured Simon, knowing that the guard could speak English.

"To Waughcotomoco, on the river the pale-face calls Mad," returned the guard.

"And what are they going to do there?" persisted Simon.

"Burn you!" retorted the guard, with a scowl, pushing his charge through the doorway.

Simon made no further attempt to speak. He was led to the wigwam in which he had spent the previous night, and there food and water were brought to him and a shouting delegation appeared and blacked him all over, with coal and water. Simon submitted calmly, but his mind was made up.

"I'll never reach Waughcotomoco alive!" he told himself over and over. But an attempt to escape from the village that night was useless, he knew, and he resolved to sleep as soundly as he could. He ate eagerly all that they gave him, which was little enough, and soon after, the sun having long since set, the town composed itself for sleep, and Simon was not the last to close his eyes in slumber.

Next day the warriors were early astir, and the march to Mad River began. Following their usual custom, the Indians walked single file, with Simon near the head, treading close upon the moccasins of the man ahead of him. Directly behind him came a very tall young Indian, with long, slender limbs, along which the muscles rippled and played beneath the dark skin as he moved.

"A good runner," thought Simon, watching him out of the tail of his eye. They were passing through a deep forest, overgrown with heavy thickets. The leaves were beginning to fall, fluttering gently down to join the moldering layers from last year; they rustled under the swift feet of the hurrying marchers.

"Once in the bushes"—Simon was busy with thoughts of escape—"I'd get away, I know I would. I kin run faster than any red skunk!" His eye went uncertainly to the lithe figure be-

hind him, and to the figures behind that, stretching away interminably, it seemed, along the worn trail.

"I kin do it!" he assured himself, over and over. "Fust good thick place I see—there it is!" But he shrank back; he knew the fury that was visited by the Indians upon prisoners who tried to escape and failed. He was unbound, by some chance; doubtless the redmen thought that he would not dare to attempt escape from such a watchful company.

"But the fire won't burn any hotter afterwards, if I do fail to git," Simon told himself, after he had repeatedly let go by chances for his attempt, and he nerved himself to act promptly next time. But each time his feet seemed to cling to the trail; at the critical moment his courage wavered.

So the precious hours slipped by, faster than Simon realized. He was amazed when he noticed the slanting rays of the sun which announced its speedy departure from the heavens. So engrossed was he in this discovery that when several of the Indians, up front, raised their rifles and fired in unison, the noise startled him, and he peered anxiously ahead, believing that the Indians had found a new victim. They were not shooting at a mark, however; immediately it was followed by a low, moaning sound from his conductors, that rose higher and higher until its

shrillness pierced his very bones, he felt; then it died away in a prolonged, fearful wail. It was the sound that curdled the blood of every frontiersman—the scalp halloo, announcing a capture.

The signal was answered by the roll of a drum, far ahead. They were approaching a town, where waited the gauntlet—the stake! Simon's indecision vanished; with a wild cry he plunged into the bushes, fleet as a hunted deer.

CHAPTER XXVI

AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

THE pursuit was instantaneous and keen; the Indians broke from the trail before the blackened, flying figure had disappeared in the brush; far in the rear horsemen heard the cries of alarm that marked the fugitive's plunge for freedom, and swung their horses outward in a semicircle, to head off the runaway. But Simon was flying for his life—the stake was before his eyes and he fled as though the scorching flames were already at his heels. He outdistanced his pursuers who were on foot, and he did not fall within the trap set by the horsemen, for he ran forward instead of back. The sound of breaking branches and stones rattling under swift feet began to grow faint, and presently they died out; Simon's face relaxed from its grim lines, and a smile flashed across his mouth. He was a free man—if he could keep up his speed for another half hour.

Cruel disappointment blotted the light from his eyes; he had run full speed into a party of horsemen, called out from the town by the signal cry of his captors and on their way to meet the

triumphant procession. With a whoop, they surrounded the unhappy Simon and held him until those from whom he had escaped had hurried up, warned of the capture by the repeated shouts and yells of the horsemen. A rope was promptly passed around Simon's neck, the Indian holding the other end started his horse up briskly, and Simon was forced to run at full speed behind the animal to keep from being choked to death.

When the town was reached, his miserable self was given over to the young Indians, who pinioned his arms and legs, dragged him to a creek, and there spent a joyous hour (for them), tumbling their captive about in the water and rolling him in the mud, until he could not see or hear, and could scarcely breathe. When Simon was as nearly drowned as might be, without having his life actually extinguished, he was taken to the door of the Council House, and there tied to the stake. Once more the whipping, dancing and yelling began; once more, Simon, through blood-shot eyes, watched the whirling, painted figures that leaped round and round him, in an unending circle, until the individual forms blurred and he was staring at a streak of dull bronze that revolved swiftly, lit occasionally by flashes of color and bursts of flame when, now and then, an Indian waved a burning torch in his face.

That night there was a feast of roast venison,

but Simon, left at his post to be tortured by the mosquitoes and gnats that swarmed around him in the unseasonably warm night, grew sick and faint at the smell of food. When they brought him a little, therefore, he could not eat, but he was grateful for the water they gave him to drink. He was allowed to lie down late that night, when the rollicking crowd, gorged and weary, at last sought rest.

The next morning the journey was resumed; Simon was refreshed by his sleep, and his immense vitality began to reassert itself. On this trip there was no chance of escape; the prisoner was bound between two guards, with his arms tied behind him.

"The stake wouldn't be so bad," Simon began to think. "They can't burn me but once, anyways; this draggin' me from one place to another so's to give every Ingen in the country a crack at me is worse."

At Machecheek, the next town on the line of march, the delighted inhabitants arranged for Simon to run the gauntlet. It was far more terrible than Simon had anticipated. There was no loophole left for him this time; he had to run three hundred yards between the two cruel lines; he had not known he could suffer pain in so many spots at once. When he dodged a blow from a tomahawk on one side he was half stunned

by the fall of a heavy hickory club; if he missed a vicious jab from a knife, it was only to feel his flesh torn by a discharge of powder from the muzzle of a gun pressed close to his body. Before he reached the end of the lane Simon fell, unconscious, and the sport was over.

Rest, food and water revived him from his exhausted state, so that he was able to accompany his captors the next day. He was, however, too weak to keep up the pace they set, and they permitted him to mount on horseback. He did not attempt to speak to any of the savages now, but from their talk he gathered that the next town they would strike was Waughcotomoco.

"The end!" thought Simon, and a certain relief came into his heart. The stake awaited him, but he no longer shrank from the thought. Death meant release from his gradually increasing sufferings. He was unbound, and he relished his ride through the gloriously tinted forest. He was not even closely watched; and he wished that he had the strength to make a dash for freedom, but he knew he was too weak to succeed. Every muscle ached, every nerve throbbed, a dozen ugly wounds gave him excruciating pain, and a terrible blow on one knee had lamed him so that, with the best of luck, he could not hope to make any progress on foot and an escape on horse-

back, amid the tangled underbrush, he knew was impossible.

The town, duly apprised of the victorious party's arrival by the scalp halloo, rose promptly to the unusual occasion and prepared a gauntlet for Simon's reception. Lame as he was, the captive made a poor showing.

"Not a single whack is missin' me," he thought as he went down under the rain of blows before he had passed more than a quarter of the distance. He rose and tried to run on, but someone threw a handful of sand in his eyes, and he could not see where to run. Yelling delightedly, the savages beat their victim until he fell insensible. The Indians, disgruntled over this speedy end to their sport, went off to restore their spirits in feasting and dancing, and Simon was hustled off to a wigwam corner, bound, and left till morning.

Next day a council was called to settle the exact details of the prisoner's torture and death, and Simon himself was taken to the Council House to listen to the long debate. He sat with bowed head, listening to the ominous words which he could not understand. A sudden commotion near the door made him look up.

"Shoot 'em down all one pigeon!" cried a voice in English, in the sort of dialect the redmen employed. Simon's eyes took in the tall figure of a white man, who, however, was dressed like an

Indian and so deeply burned by the sun as to be almost as dark as they. He was waving a handful of scalps in one hand, and pointing with the other to a group outside the door, which Simon, peering intently, made out to be some white children.

As the new arrival, in a loud tone, continued to tell how he had taken the seven scalps, and brought back seven white children as captives, Simon raised his eyes to the speaker's face and recognized—Simon Girty!

A wave of joy surged through Simon's heart, and instantly receded. Was not Girty an Indian now? Was he not worse than the redman himself? Tales of his unbelievable cruelty to white prisoners had filtered back to the border; every frontiersman knew that Simon Girty helped to direct the most successful of the Indian attacks on the border; he used his white man's brain to turn the redman's hatred into the channels that would inflict the most suffering on the members of his own race.

"He won't help me," thought Simon, hopelessly, letting his head droop once more. "He will help to torture me when the time comes," and his heart sickened at the thought of one of his own kind, one who had laughed and talked with him in the old days, rejoicing, with savages, at the misery of a white man.

274 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

The arrival of Girty created a diversion, and Simon was led away from the Council House to await the result of the discussion. The hours slipped by.

"He knew I was a white man—maybe it ain't true that he's turned agin all the whites," the thought formed and reformed in Simon's mind. "Even ef he leads the Ingens agin the settlements, maybe he won't want to kill one single lone feller," he assured himself. When at last a messenger came to conduct him back to the Council House, and hear the sentence passed upon him, the captive was almost hopeful. The messenger signified that Simon was to enter the room ahead of him; with the calmness of despair, and that tiny hope flickering in his heart, Simon pulled aside the buffalo skin that served as a door; he glanced eagerly at the faces turned toward him. A savage scowl on every countenance answered his inquiring look, and he needed no words to announce to him his fate.

Simon Girty, scowling as fiercely as any of the redmen, now stepped forward, and throwing a blanket upon the floor, ordered the prisoner to sit down. Unnerved by the shock of realizing that his last hope, born that day, was indeed gone, Simon Kenton stood hesitating, hardly aware that Girty was addressing him. Angrily the

renegade seized him by the arm and jerked him violently down upon the floor.

"How many men are there in Kentucky?" Girty began the usual list of questions put to captives, when their foes wished to find out how matters stood on the frontier.

"I don't know," answered Simon truthfully. "But I will give you the names of the officers, and you can judge of the number of men."

"Well, then, begin."

"Daniel Boone," began Simon; "Colonel Bowman, Captain Harrod, Captain Montgomery—" and he proceeded to give the name of every man in the state of whom he had ever heard, and who had a title of any kind, whether or not they were in charge of any border troops, and whether or not they happened to be alive at that time. By this he hoped to give the impression to the savages that there were many men in the settlements, since there were so many commanders, for he knew that such a belief would discourage contemplated raids on the towns.

For some minutes Girty continued to ply the captive with questions, and Simon answered with as misleading information as he could invent on the spur of the moment. At last, his stock of queries exhausted, Girty became personal.

"What is your name?" he demanded.

"Simon Butler."

Girty started, and leaned forward to peer into the prisoner's face, black with charcoal, swollen, and disfigured with half-healed scars. His eyes met the honest blue ones he had known so well back in the days when they hunted around Fort Pitt, and later, when together they hunted the redman, under orders from Governor Dunmore.

"Simon! Simon Butler!" The renegade, sulen and malicious a moment before, was pulling the prisoner to his feet. He threw his arms about him, and Simon Kenton, sadly returning the embrace, was surprised to see that his eyes were full of tears.

"Simon Butler—condemned to die!" cried Girty, at last, releasing his hold. "Oh, why did it have to be you? No!" his voice rang harshly with decision, "I'll use every means in my power—I don't forget you were once on hand an' saved my hair!"

Motioning Simon Kenton to one side, he stepped into the circle of astonished warriors, and began to speak to them, partly in their own tongue, partly in English, so that Simon Kenton might know what he was saying.

"Brothers," said he, "this is my ancient comrade and friend! We have traveled the same war-path; slept upon the same blanket; we have dwelt in the same wigwam. Pity my feelings, O brothers! Spare me the agony of seeing my

old friend tortured at the hands of my adopted brothers. Surely you will not refuse me so trifling a favor as the life of one white man. Only one! Is that a big favor to a warrior who has proved by three years' earnest effort how zealous he is in the cause of the Indian? My brothers know how true I am to their nation! Are not my hands dyed with the blood of the hated whites, as red as those of any brave here to-day? Have I ever before asked a favor?"

The earnest speech was listened to in profound silence, and when he had ceased speaking the renegade heard a few grunts of approval. But a piercing-eyed warrior sprang to his feet and came forward.

"The fate of the prisoner has been already decided in solemn council," he said, in Shawnese. "He is a bad man; he tried to steal our horses, and he tried to shoot one of our braves. So bad a man at heart could never become an Indian—why spare his life? All the men who are stealing the beautiful Kain-tuck-ee hunting grounds are bad," continued the warrior, warming to his task. "They must all be killed—let us begin with the one we now hold prisoner. Then there will be one less to deal with on the war-path! Besides," he added in conclusion, "many warriors have come from a long distance to behold the prisoner's death by torture. They will be

278 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

sorely disappointed if they have all their trouble for nothing! How cruel to disappoint many people for the sake of one, or two at most! But for my part," slyly, "I believe that the white man must feel honored that he is to receive his fiery death at the hands of so many brave warriors."

Girty stepped forward with blazing eyes.

"When have I ever interceded for a white man's life before?" he demanded. "Am I partial to the whites? The seven scalps I have just brought in proves that I am not. And are there not seven white children to be adopted into the tribe—children that I myself captured, single-handed? This is the first and last request that I shall ever make, brothers. If you refuse me that which you would not refuse to the intercession of one of your chiefs, I will feel myself disgraced. I will know that you look upon me as unworthy of confidence. What white man," he asked, his tones impassioned by the stony look upon the faces before him, "what white man has ever seen my back? From what expedition have I shrunk? Whose tomahawk is bloodier than mine? Show that you approve my zeal, O brothers, and spare the life of my friend!"

For nearly two hours the debate raged, while Simon Kenton stood motionless, his face devoid of expression, lest any movement or action on his

part should turn the tide of favor against him. He understood very little of what was said, but the gestures of the speakers were eloquent and an occasional phrase in English showed the trend of the discussion. At last the war-club was brought out once more and passed around. Simon had thought that he had watched its progress with anxiety before; but now, with hope newly risen from blank despair, he felt suffocated by the mere beating of his heart as he looked on. The first man struck the ground fiercely; the second passed it in silence; the third struck the ground, and then it passed, silently, a half a dozen warriors before it was again struck. As it moved on around the circle Simon's blood raced more and more madly; he could hardly keep from trembling. But as it neared the end, and he knew that he had been reprieved, he stood unmoved as a man of stone; he could feel no more. It was Simon Girty who greeted the outcome with a shout of triumph, and with an arm about his friend's shoulders, led him from the Council House.

CHAPTER XXVII

"YOU MUST DIE!"

"**F**UST thing, Simon, you need a good meal and somethin' to wear."

Simon Kenton nodded dumbly as he permitted Girty to lead the way to his own wigwam.

"Never wuz so glad of anythin' in my life!" continued the renegade, with honest enthusiasm. "I rec'lect that day you yanked me inside the gate, Simon, jist in time. I'm plumb glad I kin help you now."

Girty had a wigwam all to himself, Simon found, for he was highly esteemed by his adopted brothers. The wigwam was built of long, straight poles, driven into the ground in a circle, leaning inward, and covered with woven mats of grasses and thin twigs. At the top a hole was left uncovered, and when the fire was kindled in the center of the tent the smoke escaped from this hole. There was no door; one corner of a mat was lifted when anyone wished to enter, and dropped again after the visitor was inside.

"I'll get you some water and we'll fix up some of these scratches," Girty assured his companion

kindly. He was as good as his word, and presently returned with a kettle of water, and proceeded to wash Simon's wounds.

"There's an old squaw that has some good medicine fur hurts like yours," his benefactor declared, "an' I expect to see her along here any minute now. Don't you move, Simon; I'll be back soon," and he darted out of the wigwam. Where he was going Simon did not know, and he cared very little. Weariness enveloped him, and the sudden reaction, after hours of worry and torment, left him feeling lifeless. He lay on a grass mat on the floor of the wigwam and closed his eyes.

The arrival of a fat old squaw roused him, presently, and he felt warm, soothing applications against the burning places where the deepest wounds ached and throbbed. The tender care, after so many days of misery, brought tears of weakness to Simon's eyes, and when Girty finally returned, laden with a double armful of clothing, gratitude surged up in his throat so that he could hardly speak.

"I couldn't draw a bead on a buffler, jist now, Simon," he told the renegade, trying to smile.

"Never you mind the bufflers just now," returned Girty. "I've got a few things thet'll set you up fine. The British hev a trading station in this town, Simon. Ain't thet lucky fur you?"

and he held out a motley assortment of clothing—a pair of Indian leggings, such as Simon was accustomed to wear, a bright red and blue handkerchief for his neck, a homespun shirt, a grenadier's cap and a pair of moccasins.

"Put them on," he ordered his guest cheerfully. "Supper is nearly ready an' I reckon you could do with a mouthful o' stew."

"Stew, did you-all say?" demanded Simon, hastily pulling on the garments. "I reckon I'm jist starvin' fur somethin' thet'll stick to the ribs."

Outside, Simon found that preparations for a feast, in honor of the scalps Girty had brought in, were well under way. All the young women and squaws were busy about a number of large brass kettles, from which rose clouds of steam and an appetizing odor. Simon received a bowl, carved roughly out of wood, and a wooden spoon, and with the rest advanced toward the fires and received his share of boiled venison and green corn. He and Girty sat on the outskirts of the crowd. The hot food, the assurance that no immediate danger beset him, raised Simon's spirits wonderfully, and neither the lowering forest wall around him, nor the wild, half-naked figures that flitted back and forth in the light of the glowing fires could disturb his sense of well-being.

"I reckon, Simon, thet the folks in the settlements think I'm a reg'lar monster," said Girty, after the first pangs of hunger had been appeased.

"They're plumb scairt of you-all." Simon's voice was troubled.

"Air they now?" demanded Girty, with a pleased expression. "Good! Their quarters'll swim in blood ef I hev anythin' to do with it."

Simon recoiled from the ferocity in the face of the other. He longed to ask Girty why he hated his own race so much; he wanted to know what had turned him from the men with whom he had fought against a common foe only a few years before, but he dared not question him. His life lay in Girty's hands; Girty must not become angered at him! He tried to turn the talk.

"The redskins seem to think a heap o' you-all," he said, placatingly.

"They're good friends." A sly note crept into Girty's voice and he leaned nearer to his companion.

"They'd be good friends to a fine, strong feller like you. They hev red skins, but they treat you white, when they like you. It's an easy life—huntin' an' fishin'; the war-path now and then, but—you-all don't hev to be in front!"

Simon's blood tingled at the insinuation; he dared not look at Girty for fear his contempt

284 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

would show in his eyes. "I owe my life to him, I owe my life to him," he repeated, over and over to himself. "But he ain't the man he used to be—he's changed," he thought, sadly.

Pretending to be busy with his supper, Simon did not answer until he was sure that his tones were steady.

"I don't know ez they'd really want me to be an Ingen," he said then; "they seemed to be powerful set agin me awhile back."

"Well, think it over," Girty said, "you'll find they'll be just as good friends to you as they were enemies, now that they've pardoned you."

Simon slept soundly that night, but before his eyes closed he lay for a few minutes, staring at the dark.

"I'd be safe," he muttered; "William Veach's folks would never get me from the Ingens; I'd be safe from capture." But the vision of murdered borderers rose before him and his deep loathing of savage cruelties overwhelmed his weary brain and he fell asleep amid the confusion of his thoughts.

Next day, when he went abroad among the Indians, he found himself treated with complete respect, but he found it difficult to believe that the redmen's attitude toward him had really changed. Consequently, when, toward the middle of the day, a group of the savages surrounded

him and one began to pull out his hair, he was sure they had returned to the pleasure of torturing him and a look of despair spread over his face. Girty, returning at that moment, laughed at Simon's woebegone expression.

"They're going to adopt you, Sharp-eye!" he cried. "I told them you wanted to be an Ingen. Now don't you worry; this is the first stage of your adoption."

Simon's eyes followed the movements of the Indian who had begun plucking out his hair; this individual had some ashes on a piece of bark close beside him, and into this he frequently dipped his fingers, so as to get a firmer hold. One by one he plucked out the hairs, and Simon, now that he knew no worse was to come, sat in calm indifference, refusing to allow even a twinge of pain to cross his face.

When he had pulled all the hair from his victim's head, except for a small spot three inches square on the crown, the Indian brought into play a pair of scissors which had been obtained from the white men. With these the savage proceeded to cut close the hair in the favored spot, leaving three separate locks intact. Two of these he wrapped around with strings of beads; the other he braided.

An old chief, who had been standing at one side watching the performance, now stepped

forward, and taking Simon by the hand, led him to the middle of the town.

"Coo-wigh! Coo-wigh!" he hallooed, and immediately men, women and children came running. The chief stood in their midst, and still holding Simon by the hand, spoke for a long time in Shawnese. Then, motioning to three young women, he handed over Simon to them, and they started along the trail that led to a small river. The entire population of the town fell in behind them and stood looking on while the girls motioned to Simon to walk into the river.

"No!" said Simon, violently, as the women tried to pull him into the river. They laughed and pulled harder.

"Want to drown me fur the rest o' the savages to laugh at!" thought Simon, bitterly. "So Girty tricked me after all! They're a-goin to drown me instead o' burnin' me. Well, I'll put up a good fight fust!" and he broke away from the women. But they seized him again, while the crowd shouted and roared with laughter. The girls pulled and pushed, their long, lithe limbs strong as young saplings; Simon, not daring to hurt them, had hard work to keep himself from being plunged into the river. Suddenly Simon Girty, laughing as heartily as any of the rest, broke through the crowd and came close to the scrambling group.

"It's all right, Simon," he called. "They're only going to wash the white blood out of you. They won't let you drown."

With a sheepish grin, Simon gave up his struggles, and submitted meekly enough to being led into the water. There, for an hour, the women washed him and scrubbed him, until he felt that there could not be a whole piece of skin on his body; but at the end of that time they led him out of the river and up to the council house. Some important looking members of the tribe were waiting there; they painted the white man's face, and stuck red feathers in one of the locks they had left upon his head; they fastened a belt of wampum on his neck and motioning him to be seated on a bearskin, they gave him a pipe, a tomahawk, and a pouch made of skunk skin, filled with tobacco and dried sumach leaves. While this had been going on, the council house had been gradually filling up with warriors, all dressed and befeathered in their most impressive style. They too seated themselves upon skins and piles of boughs, and for a long while there was a deep silence. Every man was smoking, and the air of the room grew blue and dense. Finally one of the chiefs arose and made a speech. Simon, of course, did not understand what was said, but Girty told him: it was a speech of welcome to Simon into the tribe.

288 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

That night the thought came to Simon stronger than before: ought he to stay with these savages, where he was safe from the vengeance of his own kind? But he could not decide; he put the thought away for another time.

Three weeks went by, and Simon was no nearer a solution of his problem. The Indians treated him as one of themselves, except that they gave him no chance to escape. In Girty he had a companion to whom he could talk; he had plenty of good food; his strength was swiftly returning and most of his wounds were completely healed; he was content to let matters drift, for the time being.

Simon and his renegade companion, accompanied by an Indian named Red Pole, were walking together just outside of the village.

"You're a credit to the tribe, Simon," Girty laughingly told his friend. "I never saw an Ingen get well any faster than you're doing."

He was interrupted by the peculiar, repeated cry of an Indian who was coming toward them from the town.

"What does he want?" Simon's tone was apprehensive. He had learned to dread halloo signals.

"It's the distress halloo," returned Girty.

"Wal, I don't like the sound of it."

When the messenger came close enough, he

put out his hand and shook hands with Girty, gravely, and tendered the same greeting to Red Pole, but Simon's outstretched hand he ignored, addressing a piece of news to Girty.

"He says that all warriors are gathering in the Council House," explained that favored inhabitant of the village.

"Another council!" Simon's eyes were wide with anxiety. "I don't like councils; they don't seem to mean much good fur me."

However, there was nothing to do but to comply with the summons, and he followed the other two as they hastened to the principal village structure. They found it unusually full. Girty and Red Pole shook hands with all the Indians within reach, and following their example, Simon extended his hand to the nearest savage. The redman made no movement; he tried the next man; that one put his hands behind him and scowled fiercely at Simon; when six Indians had refused to shake hands with him, poor Simon, certain now that the meeting boded ill for him, withdrew to a corner and stood with lowered head and folded arms.

"What have I done?" he thought, sadly racking his brain for the offense he was sure he must have committed. Meanwhile, the business of the meeting went forward. A number of strange chiefs were present, wearing sullen looks, and

290 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

one after the other they got up and spoke at great length, with many gestures, fiery words and contemptuous glances at Simon. Girty rose to answer them, finally, speaking in English so that Simon could understand.

"My friend is not at fault," he declared. "You led a war-party against the whites and were defeated; many of your men were killed. But my brother, who has never left this neighborhood since he came into it, is not to blame for that. Blame your own rifles, which did not shoot as swiftly as the white men's. Do not seek to revenge yourselves upon the only white man at hand; you who were not able to make a capture yourselves! This man has been tried and received pardon; he has been adopted into the tribe."

Girty's words met with a torrent of protest from one of the village who had before voted for Simon's death; more speeches followed and Girty pleaded again and again for his friend, but without avail; when the vote was taken, Simon knew that his cause was lost.

"You must die!" Girty whispered to him; he was sad and disheartened, for all the old affection in which he had held his comrade of the woods, years before, had been revived during these weeks of companionship.

"Never mind!" returned Simon, as cheerfully

as he could. "You-all did your best fur me an' thar's no one could save me, ef you couldn't I reckon."

His words were cut short by the group of savages who approached, the light of triumph in their eyes, and seizing the unfortunate white man, bound his arms tightly and fastened the rope around his neck. There was no time for further speech as the Indians hastily jumped on their horses and turned toward the woods.

"Good-by!" Simon managed a parting shot as he turned to look back at Girty, standing disconsolately beside the last wigwam in the village; a rough jerk of the halter round his neck brought him swiftly about, and half choked him; he did not see Girty's arm, upraised in farewell.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE STAKE

FIVE Indians formed a formidable enough escort for Simon, particularly as they seemed to be an unusually disgruntled lot. The prisoner recognized them as members of the strange party he had seen in the Council House.

"Mad ez snappin' turtles," said Simon to himself, "all because the whites beat 'em hollow," and he set out to discover where they were taking him. By degrees he dragged from them the information that they were going to Sandusky, a place which Simon knew as the point where the British paid off their Indian allies every year; a large crowd would be gathered there, they told him, and the assembled tribes could enjoy the solemn spectacle of the death of the prisoner. Simon heard the news unmoved. He had faced death so many times in the past few weeks that he was no longer capable of becoming excited about his execution, as long as it was still several days in the future.

The next village that lay in the way of the party was passed without a stop.

"Thar's one thing to be thankful for," murmured Simon, as the cluster of huts faded from view. "It's very wearin', bein' whacked by every last Ingen in a town."

Two miles further on he observed an Indian woman chopping wood beside the trail, while her master, on a log beside her, smoked at ease and directed her efforts. The redman's eyes met the glance of the captive; a look of fury flashed from them, and before Simon's guards, riding ahead of him, could intervene, the savage, leaping to his feet, had snatched the ax from the squaw's hands and dealt the prisoner a terrific blow on the shoulder, almost severing the arm. Bound as he was, Simon could do nothing, but the other Indians turned at the involuntary cry of pain wrung from his lips.

"Hi!" cried the nearest, catching the strange Indian's arm as he was about to repeat the blow. A flood of angry words addressed to the offender caused him to slink back among the trees.

"Almost robbed 'em of the pleasure o' torturin' me agin," groaned Simon, looking down at the blood that was flowing from his arm. The Indians rode on until they were out of sight of their captive's assailant, and stopped long enough to unbind Simon's arms, cover the wound with leaves and moss and strips of bark, and sling his arm in a comfortable position with strips

of deerskin. Simon was grateful for the attention, though he knew it was given him only because his guards were afraid that he might die before they reached their destination, and they would be held responsible for his death.

The march began again; Simon was in great pain, and forced to walk rapidly, but so thoroughly had his strength revived during the last few weeks that he was able to endure this terrible hardship with composure. Before nightfall the party reached a large village on the Scioto River. Simon, with a single guard, was led to a wigwam and had a piece of bear's meat given him for supper. He was finishing the last of it with relish, when the doorway was darkened by a tall figure. He looked up to see a middle-aged chief, with handsome, regular features. A bright red blanket partly covered a shirt of green deerskin; this and the leggings he wore, and his moccasins, were all fringed and beautifully embroidered with beads. He approached and stood looking down at Simon.

"Well, young man." His voice was soft and musical, and he spoke English perfectly. "These warriors seem very mad at you."

"Yes, sir," said Simon, surprised at the Indian's speech, as much as the kindness in his tone. "They certainly are."

"Well—don't be disheartened. You are to go

to Sandusky—they speak of burning you there—but I am a great chief and to-morrow I will send two runners to speak good for you.”

With that he withdrew, and Simon, his heart high once more, asked his guard who it was.

“Logan.” The answer carried Simon back to the beginning of Governor Dunmore’s War. Logan was the chief whose family had been murdered at Yellow Creek, and who, in consequence, had taken the warpath and exacted revenge many times over until the state of Virginia had been forced to intervene to save the borderers from extermination. Logan had white blood, Simon knew; his father had been a white man, taken captive and reared among the Indians.

True to his word, the chief dispatched two runners on the following morning, and Simon was treated with great kindness throughout the day. At nightfall, the messengers returned and disappeared inside Logan’s cabin. Simon, who had noted their arrival, sat anxiously outside his wigwam, watching for the chief. But darkness fell, and the guard insisted on Simon lying down beside him to sleep, so that his uneasiness was unappeased. But his heart almost sang when he saw Logan coming toward him the next morning, until he observed that the chief’s manner was downcast.

“Eat,” he said, handing Simon a piece of corn

296 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

bread. "You are to be taken to Sandusky at once!"

Before Simon could ask a question, he turned away. The prisoner's heart sank; Logan's intercession had failed. Simon smiled bitterly at the chief's retreating back.

"I might ez well stop hopin'," he told himself; "then I won't be disappointed so much."

The five Indians who had brought him from Waughcoto-moco threw the halter round his neck again, and drove him before them into the forest. The way seemed all too short to Simon, footsore though he was; his moccasins had long since been worn through and he had nothing with which to mend them, so that the stones cut his feet cruelly. At Sandusky men, women and children streamed out of the town to greet the arrivals and amid the general rejoicing Simon noticed that a stake was already prepared in the center of the town, and surrounded with piles of brush-wood.

"No wait this time." His head drooped at the thought. "After havin' so many narrow escapes, it seems too bad I hev to be cooked now," he muttered. But he had small time for reflection. Whooping and yelling, a pair of stalwart Indians seized the captive and dragged him to the stake, where they fastened his arms behind his back, tying the end of the same rope near the

bottom of the pole. This allowed the victim to take a step or two either way around the pole. Simon, watching with fascinated eyes the preparations for his torture, with the sharpness of strained senses caught a strange whispering in the forest about him.

"The wind's risin'! It'll fan the flames," he groaned inwardly. One of the ring-leaders was busy with flint and steel. A tongue of flame leaped from beneath his fingers and ran along the dry wood, licking the twigs with a faint crackling. The shouts of the Indians increased in volume at sight of the flame, and several young braves, seizing bits of burning brands, ran to thrust them against the prisoner's body, first tearing the clothes from him. Simon was driven hither and thither to the end of his rope round the post, instinctively striving to avoid the flaming sticks. Delighted laughter greeted his efforts and more warriors crowded close to discharge their powder-loaded guns into his flesh.

But the wind, which Simon had noticed, suddenly wailed among the tree-tops and a fierce gust whirled the dirt into the merry-makers' eyes. At the same time a swift darkness overspread the sky, and glancing up, Simon saw that heavy clouds were hanging directly above the scene. Next moment the rain burst from the heavens, in a sweeping torrent that extinguished the fire

298 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

immediately and drove the Indians to shelter. Simon stood alone, still bound to the stake, while the cooling stream played upon him and soaked into the brush that was to have been his funeral pyre.

It was about three hours past mid-day by now, and the rain ceased as abruptly as it had begun. As soon as it was over, the savages swarmed out, and finding the soaking wood impossible to rekindle, gave themselves up to the enjoyment of kicking and beating the prisoner. It was late at night when they abandoned this amusement in favor of sleep, and Simon was released and sent to a wigwam, under guard. But his guard was not sleepy, and for a long time he kept Simon awake, to listen to the tale of the torture in store for him on the morrow. But at last he talked himself out, and the exhausted prisoner was at liberty to sleep.

He lay in a half-stupor until the guard woke him roughly next morning and commanded him to rise. Simon stumbled to his feet and followed his leader out of the wigwam, through the street, and into a building which the captive recognized as the Council House. A great assembly of warriors was inside, and in the midst of them stood a British officer, in the scarlet coat of his rank. He paid no attention to Simon, but began at once to address the gathering.

"It is well known that neither peace nor safety can be expected while the Americans are free to roam the forests," he announced, and continued, for several minutes, to heap abuse upon the settlers who were ruining the redmen's hunting grounds. Grunts of approbation greeted this part of his speech.

"But the war, to be carried on successfully against the Americans," he went on, "must be conducted with cunning as well as bravery. For instance, the information that may be secured from a prisoner is of more advantage in conducting future operations of the war, than the speedy execution of that prisoner. I am sure that the commanding officer at Detroit can procure information from this prisoner, before me, that will help him to make his plans. Under these circumstances, I hope that you will defer the death of this prisoner until he can be taken to Detroit and examined. After that, he will be brought back, and may be put to death in any way you think proper."

This speech, in the Indian tongue, conveyed nothing to Simon, but he knew, from the looks he received, that he was again the subject of debate.

"I notice," continued the officer, "that you have already had a great deal of trouble and fatigue with the prisoner without being revenged

upon him; but I understand that you got back all the horses this man stole, and killed one of his companions. Now, to pay you for this trouble, I will give you a hundred dollars in rum and tobacco, or any other articles you choose, if you will let me take the prisoner to Detroit."

"You will return the prisoner when you are through with him?" demanded one of the warriors. The officer solemnly assured them that he would. After some low-toned consultation among themselves, and a few more questions, a young man arose and announced that the assembly accepted his proposition and requested the ransom to be paid down at once. This was done, and Simon was turned over to the officer. He was fed, permitted to resume the tattered clothing that had been torn from him the day before, and mounted upon a horse, rode promptly away with his new guard.

"I am Captain Peter Druyer," the officer told him, as they hurried through the forest. "I am connected with the British Indian Agent Department and am acting as interpreter between our men and the Indians. I heard about you when I arrived this morning, and I thought you had been punished enough for trying to steal horses. I've promised the Indians I will return you, but I won't do that. You have only to answer the

questions the commander asks you and you will be well treated."

The journey to Detroit was long, but pleasant enough to Simon, after his terrible privations and sufferings. Captain Druyer was a jolly companion and a certain protection against the wandering bands of Indians they encountered. Dreary November was brighter to Simon than the gorgeous October which had seen his Indian captivity, and the two, officer and prisoner, reached Detroit at the end of it.

CHAPTER XXIX

IN THE HANDS OF THE BRITISH

"I 'M like a bird in a cage!" fretted Simon. "Why, 'way back along the Ohio I never hed any too much room. Thar wuzn't a settlement could hold me an' now I'm cooped up in a British city! Hullo—thar's a powerful familiar face!" and he crossed the street to meet two men who were coming toward him.

"Jesse Coffier!" he shouted joyfully, seizing the newcomer's hand and pumping it up and down with furious energy. "An' bust my buckskins, Cap' Nate Bullitt, too! Air you-all prisoners or hev you turned renegades?" laughing uproariously at his joke.

"Afore we answer any questions, Sharp-eye Butler," returned Jesse Coffier gravely, "will you-all be good enough to explain how you happen to be wearin' your hair?"

"Yes, indeed, Simon. Back in Kentuck you're supposed to be dead. George Clark came dashin' into Boonesborough last September, an' told about you an' Andrew Montgomery bein' captured."

"Poor Andy!" Simon's grief over the fate of

his friend was still alive. "The red varmints did get him, shore enough. Shot him down thet very day and got his hair. They didn't shoot me, but they did everythin' else."

"It was different with us, wasn't it, Jesse?" said Captain Bullitt. "We were taken by the Ingens, too, but they didn't treat us bad, an' they soon sold us to the British. We were only captured a few weeks ago."

"Wal, I was tied to the stake an' made to run the gauntlet so many times I lost count!" retorted Simon. "But I've been in Detroit since the fust o' December. I've been livin' high, I kin tell you. The British air treatin' me white, I'll say thet fur 'em. They give me a job and half rations—they give me everythin' but what I want—freedom."

It was the spring of the year and the newly unfurled leaves on every tree whispered to Simon of the great forest that lay beyond the confines of the city; the forest that he knew so well—that was home to him, more than any city dwelling could ever be. He had grown strong since he had passed into the hands of the British; they had fitted him out with two suits of clothes, upon his arrival with Captain Druyer, and he had been taken before the Commander General and plied with questions about the military strength of Kentucky. He evaded these questions as best

he might, just as any patriot would, and when the officers were convinced that they had obtained all possible information from him, they turned him loose in the city, with the warning that any attempt to escape and return to an American settlement must result in recapture by the Indians that lay in his path.

"I reckon they'll let you-all live with me, since you're now guests of the city," said Simon to his new-found friend. Jesse Coffey and Captain Bullitt were older men who had been active in the Kentucky settlements; Simon had known them only casually, but in this town of strangers they seemed the closest of friends.

"That would be fine, Simon," agreed Captain Bullitt to this plan. "An' I don't see why anybody should object to it, either."

As a matter of fact, the British commander did not, and the two new prisoners from Kentucky were permitted to take up their abode in the little shack which had been Simon's home for five months. Coffey and Bullitt went to work for the British, just as Simon had done, and the three friends were very comfortable. But the lure of the forest was upon Simon, and the other two men were anxious to get back to their families.

"Thar wasn't much hope o' my gettin' away alone," said Simon, talking over with them the

possibility of escape. "But three of us ought to be able to find a way!"

"Four hundred miles of Ingen country! Remember that, Sharp-eye. Starvation, flood, the tomahawk or capture facin' us at every step."

Captain Bullitt shook his head dubiously.

"We'd have to take food enough to last us a while, an' get guns an' powder afore we started," mused Simon.

"And that's the same as tellin' the officers what we're goin' to do," retorted Captain Bullitt. "Then we won't even be allowed the freedom of the city—we'll be locked up, that's what."

"There ought to be a way for three able-bodied men to get out," put in Jesse Coffey. "Let me think."

"You're brain'll crack before you think of any plan that'll work," scoffed Bullitt.

Nevertheless, he was as anxious as the others to get away, and, like them, he brooded over the idea of escape by day and night. Moreover, he watched Simon closely, since he had been long enough in the town to make friends, and he saw that the soft-spoken, blue-eyed young giant was treated with great kindness by the women of the post. He startled his companions one night by a proposal.

"We've got to have someone to help us, and

306 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

I notice the women seem to think a heap of Simon, here."

Simon flushed scarlet at this and began an indignant denial.

"Well, they do, Sharp-eye. I don't blame 'em myself. You're a pretty well-favored piece, ain't he now, Jesse?"

Jesse confirmed this opinion with several vigorous nods and a dig of his elbow in Simon's ribs.

"There, Simon, I was only teasin' you," said Captain Bullitt, relenting. "But I notice you seem to have made friends among the people here, and we've certainly got to have help to get stocked up with the stuff we'll need. Now, the best one to help us would be a woman; nobody would suspect her very quickly and she could do a lot that a man couldn't do; besides, a woman would be more likely to help us. She'd be sorry for us, if we told her how bad we wanted to get home, and knowin' the dangers we were goin' to face, she'd want to make it as easy as possible for us."

Reflection soon convinced the two others that Captain Bullitt was right, and Simon, after some protest, admitted that, since he was known to the townspeople, he was the logical person to go out and secure the necessary assistance.

"Thar's Mrs. Harvey," he said, after some

thought. "The wife o' thet Indian trader we wuz talkin' to yesterday. She's been considerable kind to me, off and on, and always has a whackin' piece o' cake fur me when I'm passin' her way."

"That's the one!" exclaimed Bullitt. "Sound her out, Simon, and see what she'll do for us."

It was a delicate undertaking. If Mrs. Harvey failed to sympathize with the conspirators, she might consider it her duty to inform the British of their plans.

"Nice kettle o' fish thet would be!" reflected Simon, watching an opportunity to broach the subject with the lady. Mrs. Harvey was a plump, pretty woman of middle-age. She had no children, and had taken an interest in the good-looking young frontiersman, half-starved and showing the effects of many beatings, as he was when he first reached Detroit. She was a splendid cook, and had made it a point to offer the young man something to eat whenever he came her way; an offer which was never refused, for Simon's enormous frame required considerable nourishment.

It was several days before he dared open the subject of supplies with Mrs. Harvey; then, at last, he was alone with her one afternoon in the spotless kitchen of her home. Mrs. Harvey was making biscuit, and her round white arms were floury up to the elbow.

308 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

"Mrs. Harvey," began Simon, flushing uneasily, "I reckon you kin keep a secret?"

"Why, bless your heart, youngster!" said Mrs. Harvey. "I never knew one that was worth the keeping." But she looked sharply at Simon, nevertheless.

This was a bad beginning. Simon saw that he would have to make a clean breast of it.

"I never wuz one fur beatin' about the bush," he reflected; then aloud:

"See here, Mrs. Harvey. You-all hev been mighty good to me since I came to Detroit. You-all know the city ain't the place fur me, an' I didn't really do anythin' except steal a few Ingen horses. I want to get back to Kentucky!" His voice had sunk to a whisper. Mrs. Harvey stopped with a biscuit which she was shaping, in one hand, and stared at him.

"Two o' my friends air here now," continued Simon, with a gulp. "We could get away all right—you know we hev the freedom o' the city. But we hev'n't any guns, nor powder, nor food, an' we'd starve or git captured afore we got very far. Will you help us?"

"I!" Mrs. Harvey dropped the biscuit tin she had taken up. "I haven't any power to aid you."

Simon's face fell. "You-all wouldn't hev to be at any expense on our account; we've got a little money from the pay we got since we been

here. If you-all don't help us, no one will." And, big as he was, his blue eyes clouded over with tears of disappointment.

Mrs. Harvey reflected. She was not without a love of adventure, and the danger involved in the scheme appealed to her; also, she could not help feeling a little pride in being selected by these daring men as their agent. Simon's misty eyes decided her.

"All right," said she. "I'll be sorry for it, I don't doubt that—but I'll help you all I can, Simon. "Sh-h-h!" she added, as she saw a whoop of joy trembling on his lips. "I hear someone coming—— Yes, Simon," as Mr. Harvey appeared on the path outside the door, "I'll be only too glad to give you some o' these biscuits when they're done. Step around about supper time!"

"I shore will, ma'am," said Simon, and with a good-day to Mr. Harvey, he slipped past him and went down the street, his heart a-thrill, as it had not been since he came to Detroit.

Three weeks went by. Simon had transferred to Mrs. Harvey all the money he and his two friends had been able to collect, and she had reported, from time to time, that all was going well. Powder, lead, moccasins and dried beef had been bought in small quantities and hidden in a hollow tree just outside the town. Simon and his friends kept studiously away from the

310 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

vicinity of this tree, and, indeed, spoke but seldom to Mrs. Harvey. Yet a suspicion of their project hung in the air. A trader named McKinzie, who knew the country well, and was accustomed to range the section between the lakes and the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, fell into conversation with Simon one day. They were quite alone, and McKinzie, after glancing about to see if any listeners were near, remarked, off-hand:

"If I was going to Kentucky, and didn't want to meet up with any Ingens, I'd steer more west than common and get into the Wabash prairies."

Simon looked up swiftly, but the other was gazing off into space with a dreamy expression in his eyes. Did he know the secret? And was he really friendly, and trying to give good advice? Simon's brain whirled. He dared not question the trader further, lest he betray his plan, if the other did not know it. He pretended to take no notice of his strange words.

"I'm 'bliged to hurry along," was all he said, and he left his companion abruptly. The others were disturbed, too, when he repeated what had taken place, but as the days went by and nothing seemed to come of it, they all three decided that McKinzie had accidentally stumbled upon a knowledge of their plan, and was really trying to help them get away. The question of guns

troubled them most. Mrs. Harvey could not very well buy them without exciting suspicion, and the journey would be impossible if they were not obtained. But, as Mrs. Harvey said, there was always her husband's fowling piece—she would give them that, if necessary.

May passed, and June came in, a warm, sweet June that made Simon more impatient than ever.

"I reckon we'll never git started," he said gloomily to the others, who were sitting with him in the dark of their little shack, discussing the progress of affairs, late on the night of June 3.

"We'll go without guns if we can't get 'em," declared Jesse Coffey, boldly. "I'm good at snares, and we can be careful of the Ingens——"

A low knock on the door interrupted him. Simon opened it an inch and peered through the crack. The dark figure of a woman was pressed close to the door-jamb.

"A ladder, back of the garden—everything's ready," she whispered, and vanished suddenly in the dusk. Simon, shutting the door carefully, faced the others with limbs that trembled a little, now that the moment had come. In a low tone he repeated what the woman, whom he had recognized as Mrs. Harvey, had said.

"Now fur it!" he whispered, exultingly. His companions nodded and rose. There was no packing to be done—they had no possessions to

take with them, as yet. Silently they filed out of the little shack, closing the door behind them so that their departure would not be known at once. Keeping to the shadows they skirted narrow streets and approached the Harvey garden, which, at the back, opened on a dark lane. The garden was picketed by a single soldier, as the three Americans well knew, and they hid in the shadows until they heard him pass by on his way around the block. Then they dashed for the spot where Simon knew the ladder must be—he had spoken of just such a situation as he faced to-night, long before, to his brave assistant. The ladder was in place. Agile as cats they clambered up and pulled it into the garden behind them. Mrs. Harvey stood beside a bush and silently she led the way across the growing garden in the moonless dark. In a patch of peas she took Simon's hand and guided it until he felt cold steel. His fingers closed upon the rifle and knocked against another. There was a third.

"The best I could pick out," whispered Mrs. Harvey. "A party of Indian traders were having a celebration to-night and stacked their guns near our house—I got them when they fell asleep."

"Mrs. Harvey"—Simon's voice was solemn, though very low—"you-all look exactly like an angel to me." He put out his hand, gripped hers

tightly, and turned away. The others did likewise. Without another word they secured the ladder once more, lowered it, climbed down, and, as Mrs. Harvey drew it up, slipped softly away down the dark lane, their faces toward the open woods.

The sleeping town failed to see three quiet figures that flitted by, wary of sentries. Only a drowsy squirrel was disturbed by their visit to the hollow tree, where the carefully collected supplies were stored, and his excitement was momentary. It was the work of seconds to transfer all that the tree concealed to the pouches that hung at belt and neck, and then—the wilderness shadows closed behind the runaways.

CHAPTER XXX

SIMON HEARS FROM HOME

THREE gaunt figures, barely covered by the tattered strips of what had once been clothing, limped out of the forest late on the afternoon of July 6, 1779. They crossed the little clearing that surrounded the tiny settlement at the Falls of the Ohio, and were promptly commanded to halt by a guard at the stockade gate.

"Who are you?" shouted the sentry.

"Simon Butler, Jesse Coffey and Captain Nathan Bullitt, of Boonesborough and Harrodsburg," returned one of the figures, in a hoarse voice.

"Lay down your guns and come nearer." The three complied.

"What's all this?" came a voice behind the sentry, and Major George Rogers Clark stepped out of the gate.

"Don't you know me, George?" and one of the figures turned appealing blue eyes toward the officer.

"Simon Butler!" The major ran forward and threw his arm around Simon's shoulders. "And

Captain Bullitt, and Jesse Coffey! Well, well, well," and shaking their hands vigorously, he waved aside the sentry and drew the new arrivals within the gate.

It was an eager group of townspeople who gathered around the three that night, after they had eaten ravenously of a good supper, and demanded the story of their sufferings. Most of the inhabitants of the little settlement were known to all three men, for they had come from the older settlement at Boonesborough or the other outposts in that vicinity. Simon, moreover, had spent some time there a short while before, awaiting the departure of Clark's expedition against the British settlements on the Mississippi.

The wanderers told their story briefly.

"We were mighty careful to leave no traces," said Simon. "An' we traveled only at night. We steered our course west, afore we came south, goin' by the cluster." (A group of stars very useful to mariners and other travelers.) "We'd been warned to go that way, afore we started."

"We hadn't much stuff with us," put in Jesse Coffey, "and by the time me got to the Wabash River it was all gone. We had to use our guns then."

"But they wasn't much to use 'em on," added

Captain Bullitt. "Thet's prairie country, and there's little game there."

"We wished ourselves back in Detroit, whar we were shore o' hevin' our stomachs lined," grinned Simon.

"Then, just as we were near dead of starvation, we crawled out early one morning to see if we could shoot anything, and scouting around the brushwood we found ourselves facing an Indian encampment, not two hundred yards away."

"Our ha'r riz," chuckled Simon, "an' we dodged back to wait until night. We traveled only a few miles thet night—we were so hungry an' tired. But the next morning I got sight o' some timber land, an' made fur it. Thar wuz a red buck, a-grazin' peaceful ez you please. I didn't miss my aim, I kin tell you-all! Did any o' you ever taste red buck, roasted, when you'd been walkin' fur days an' hadn't had a mouthful o' food?"

"We roasted it all," said Jesse, not waiting to hear any reply. "And we carried with us what we couldn't eat that day. After that we managed to get enough to keep going—but it was a long, weary march."

On the outskirts of the crowd around the returned captives stood a tall, heavily-built young

man, who had watched Simon closely all evening. Now he shouldered his way forward.

"Yore mammy'd be pleased to know yo're alive," he drawled, watching Simon's face.

Paling beneath his tan, Simon's eyes met the dark gaze that was bent upon him. Then a wave of red surged upward to his hair.

"Air you—William Veach?" His voice was no louder than a whisper.

"I shore am, Simon Kenton, an' mighty glad to see you, too." And a big brown hand shot out to grasp Simon's.

"But, but," stammered Simon.

"I know, you licked me good an' proper! I reckon you-all thought you'd knocked the breath out o' me till kingdom come. I don't hold it agin you, Simon."

Tears stung his eyes, but Simon smiled broadly, and seizing the other's two hands, wrung them until they ached.

"Bust my coonskins, William—yo're a sight fur sore eyes! Whatever brung you out this-away?"

"Lookin' fur a new home fur my wife an' young uns. Fauquier County's gittin' too small fur us, too."

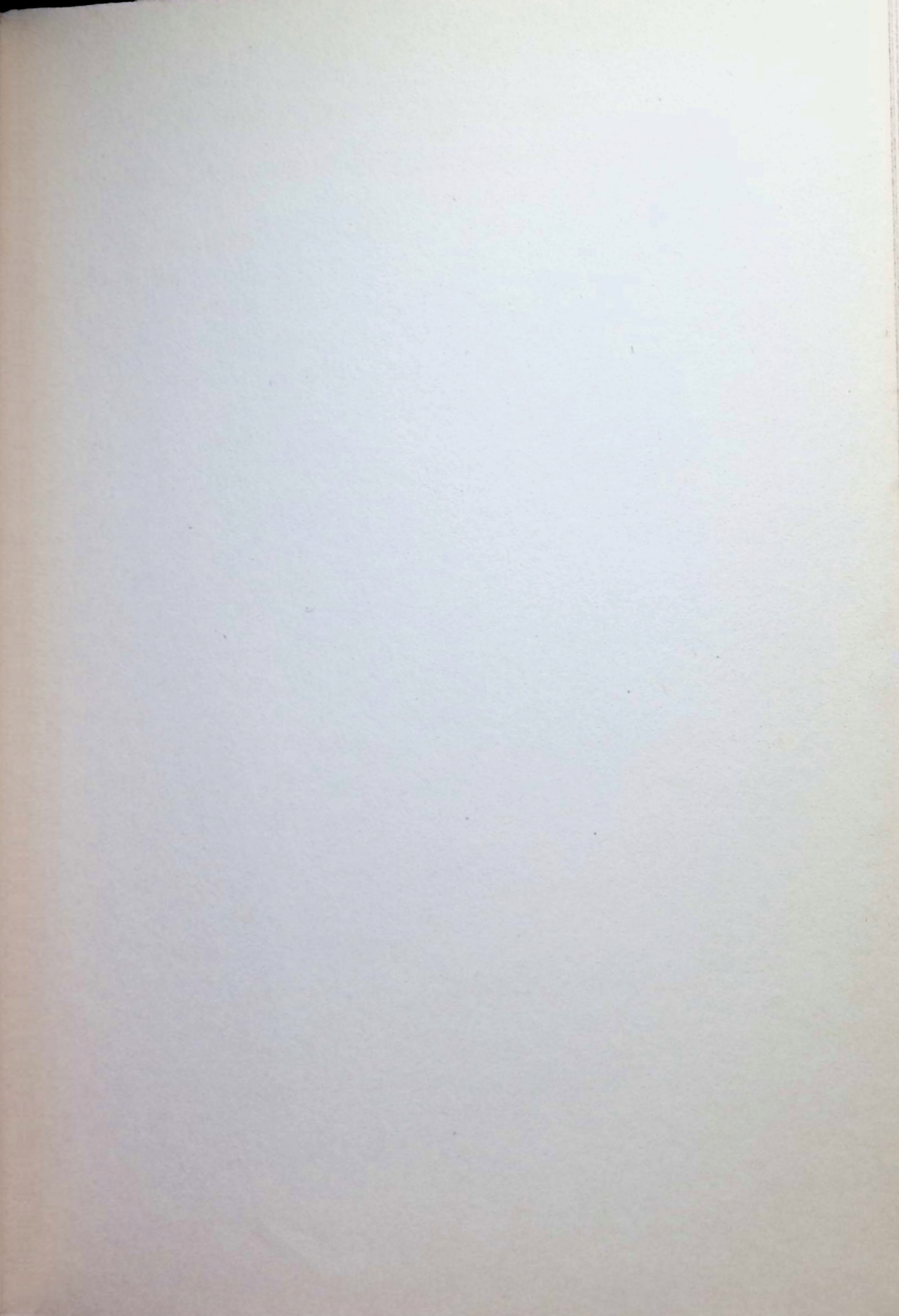
"No," said Simon, solemnly. "I reckon you wuz sent out here to ease my mind, ez a reward fur all the gauntlet runnin' I been doin'."

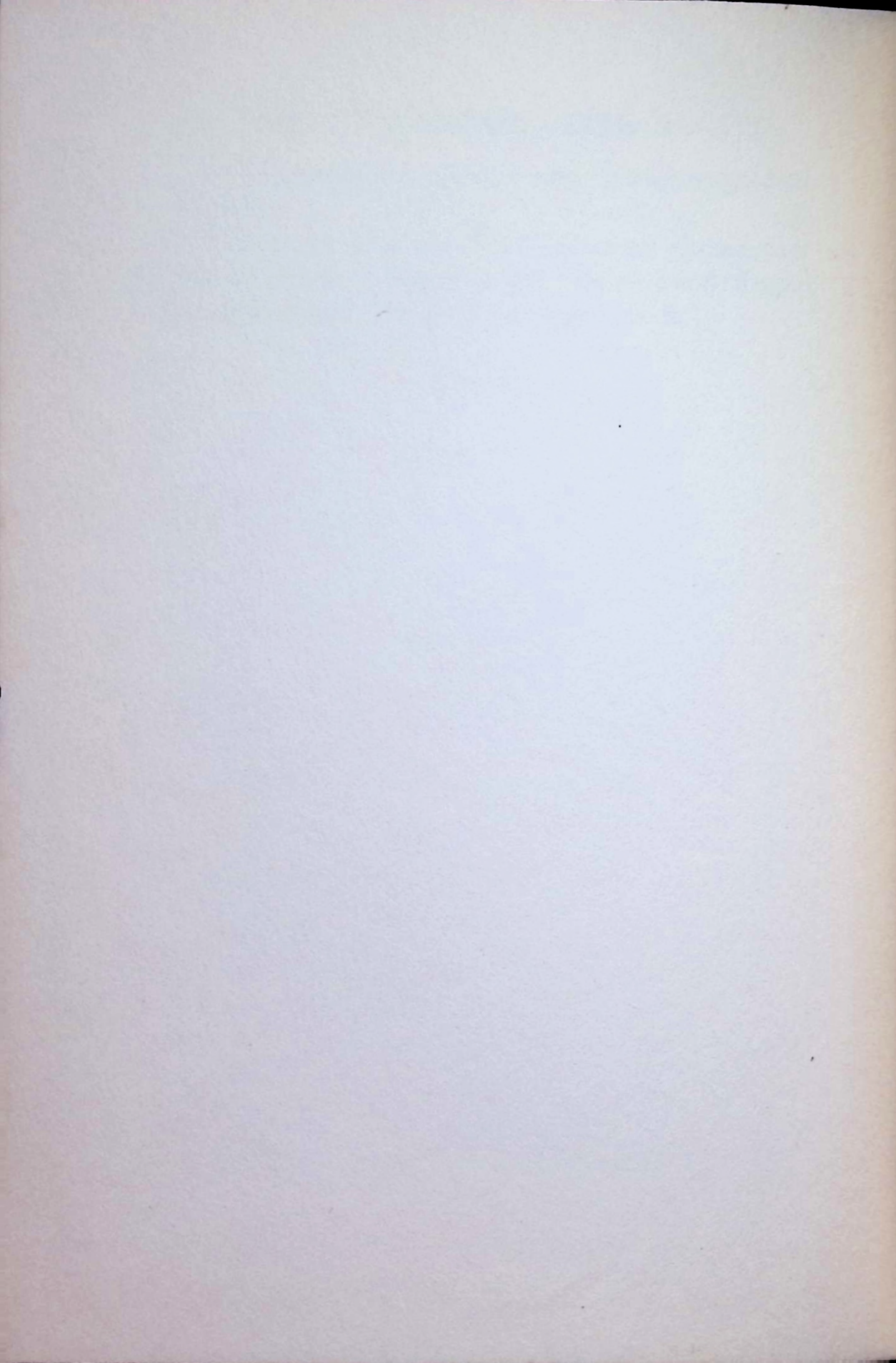
318 SIMON KENTON, THE SCOUT

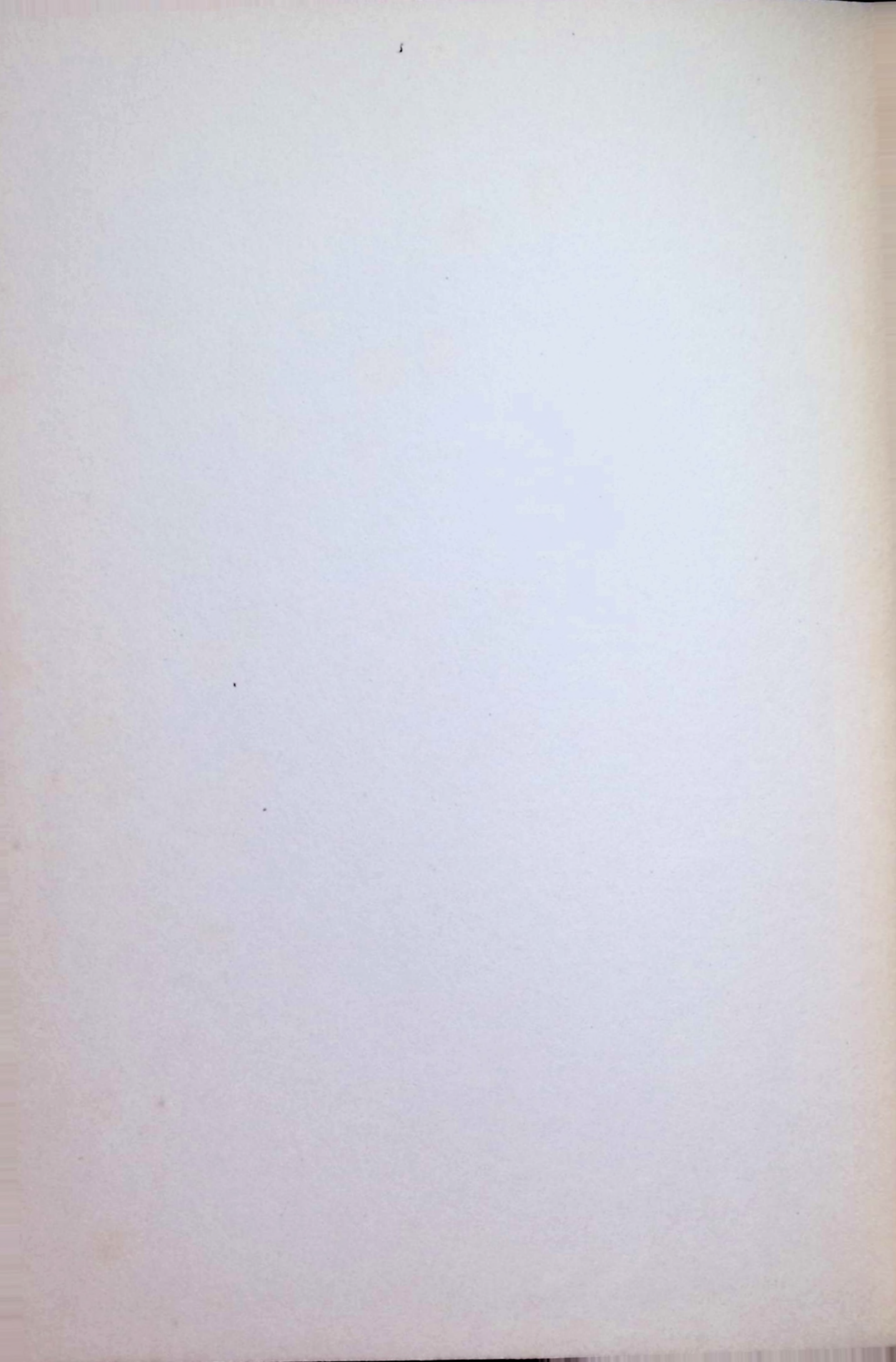
"Yore folks'd be glad to see you," suggested William.

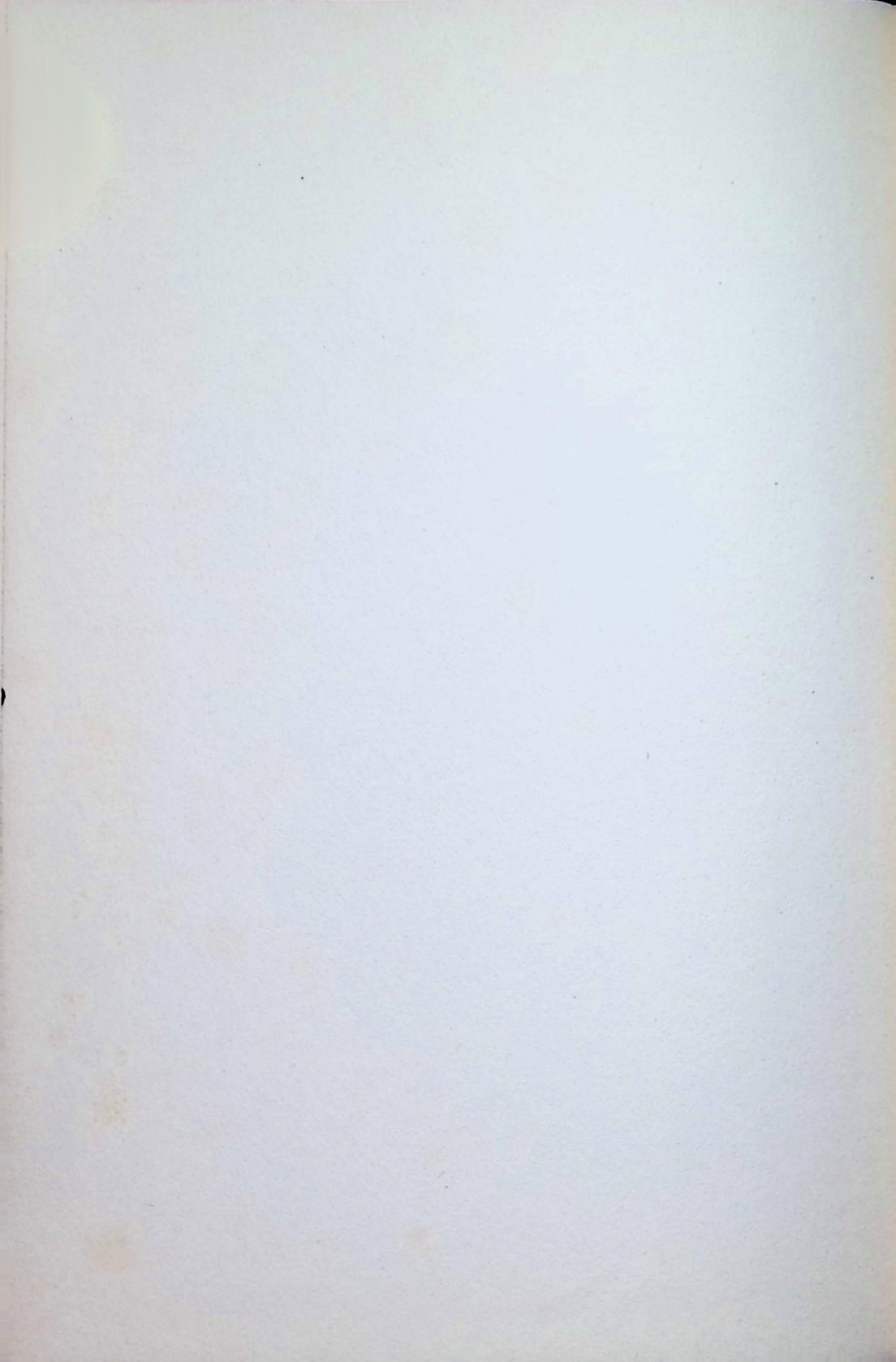
"I'll be glad to see them"—Simon sighed contentedly—"and when I git me a good Ingen horse I reckon I'll go home fur a visit."

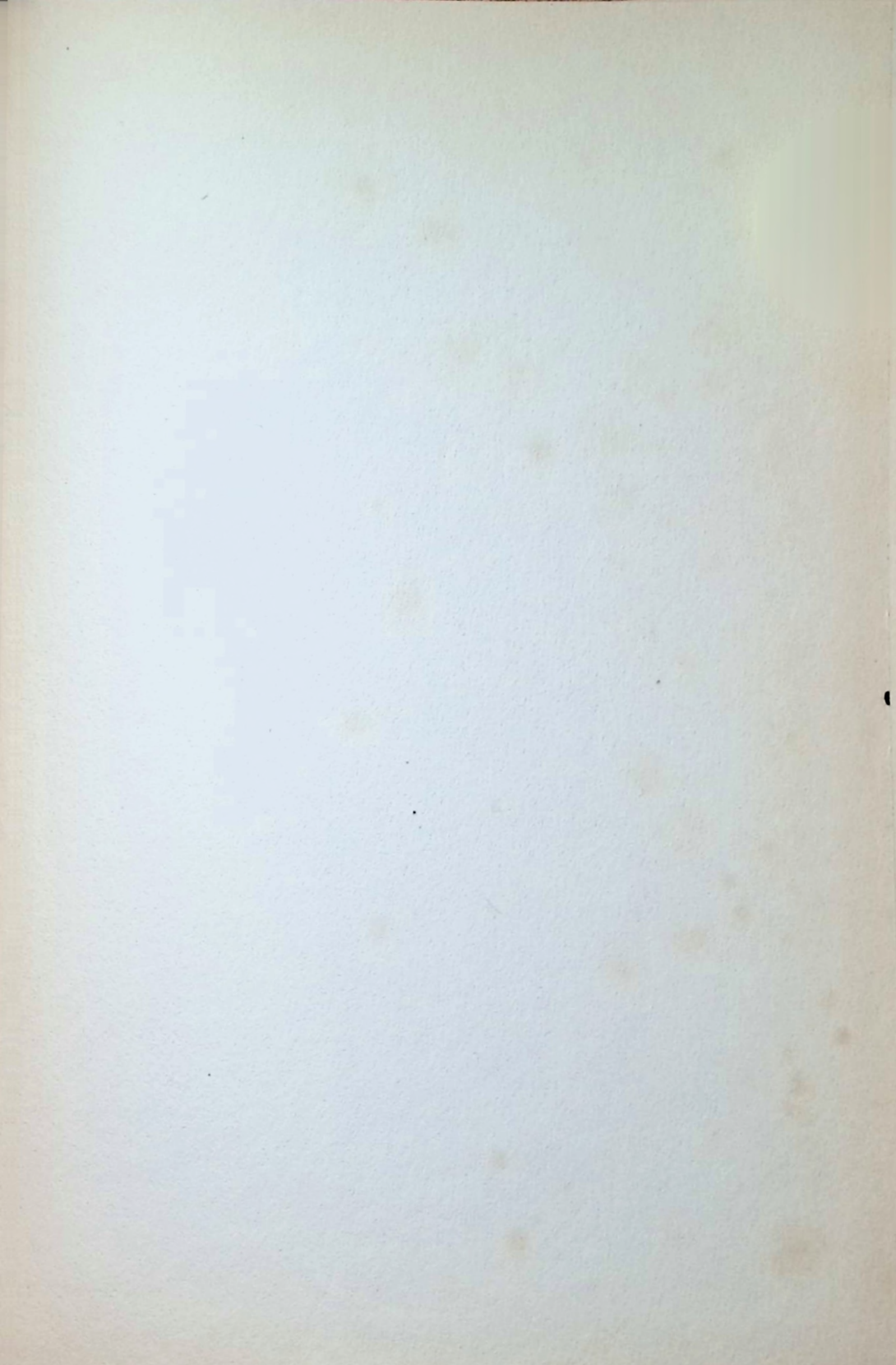
THE END



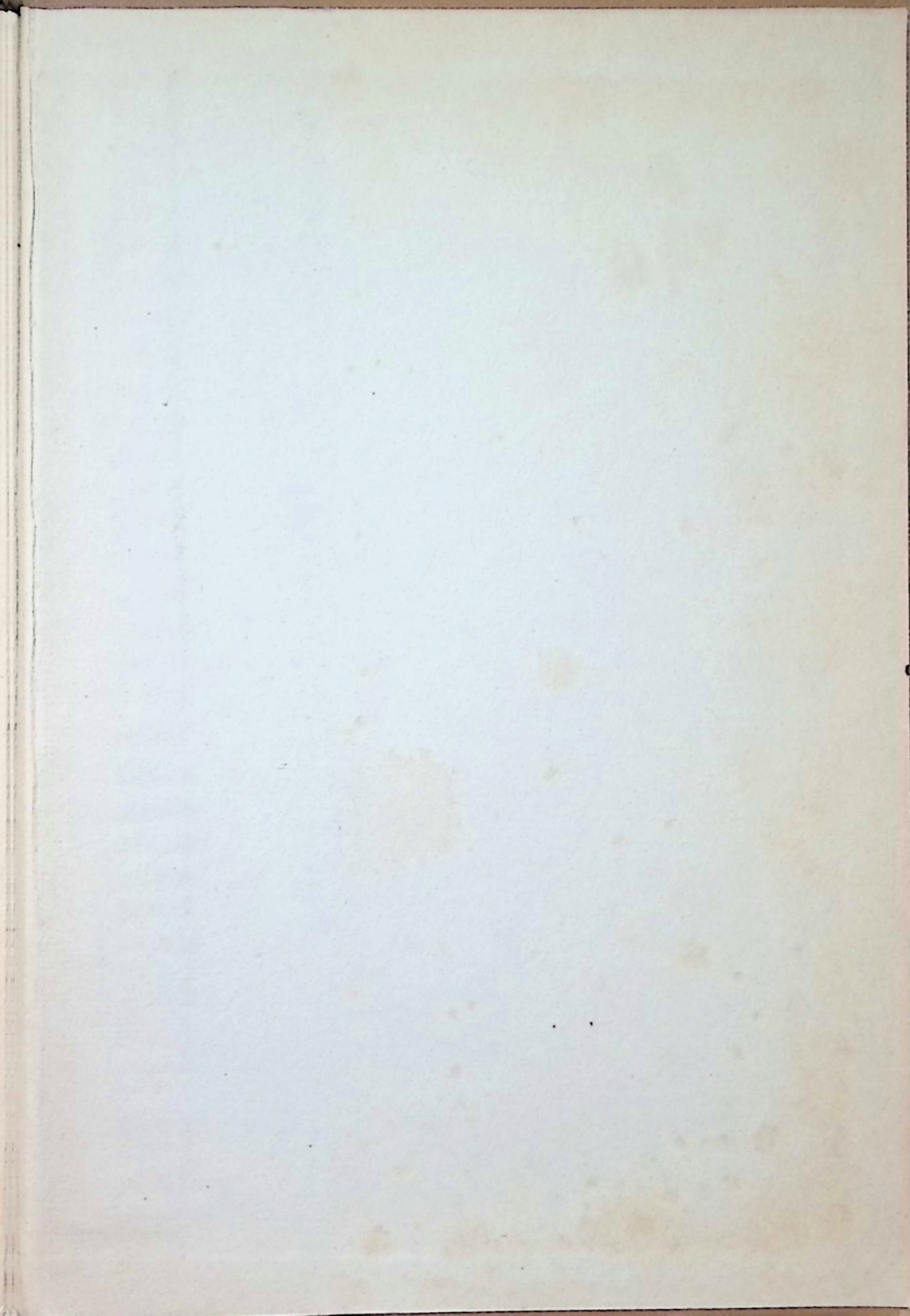












University of Louisville Libraries



U005 24484549 4